

ADVENT

VI, No. 1

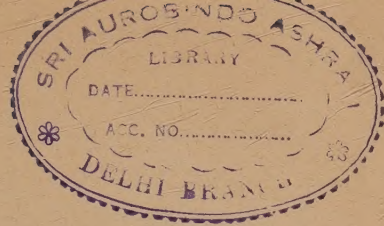
February 1949

*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of
Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*



Subscription : Inland, Rupees Five; Foreign, Twelve Shillings Six Pence
Inland : Single Copy, Rupee One and Annas Eight

PUBLICATION OFFICE — SRI AUROBINDO LIBRARY, GEORGE TOWN, MADRAS



The Advent



From the point of view of a spiritual life, it is not what you do that matters most, but the way in which it is done and the consciousness you put into it. Remember always the Divine and all you do will be an expression of the Divine Presence.

When all your actions are consecrated to the Divine, there will be no longer activities that are superior and activities that are inferior; all will have an equal importance—the value given them by the consecration.

THE MOTHER

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The ADVENT

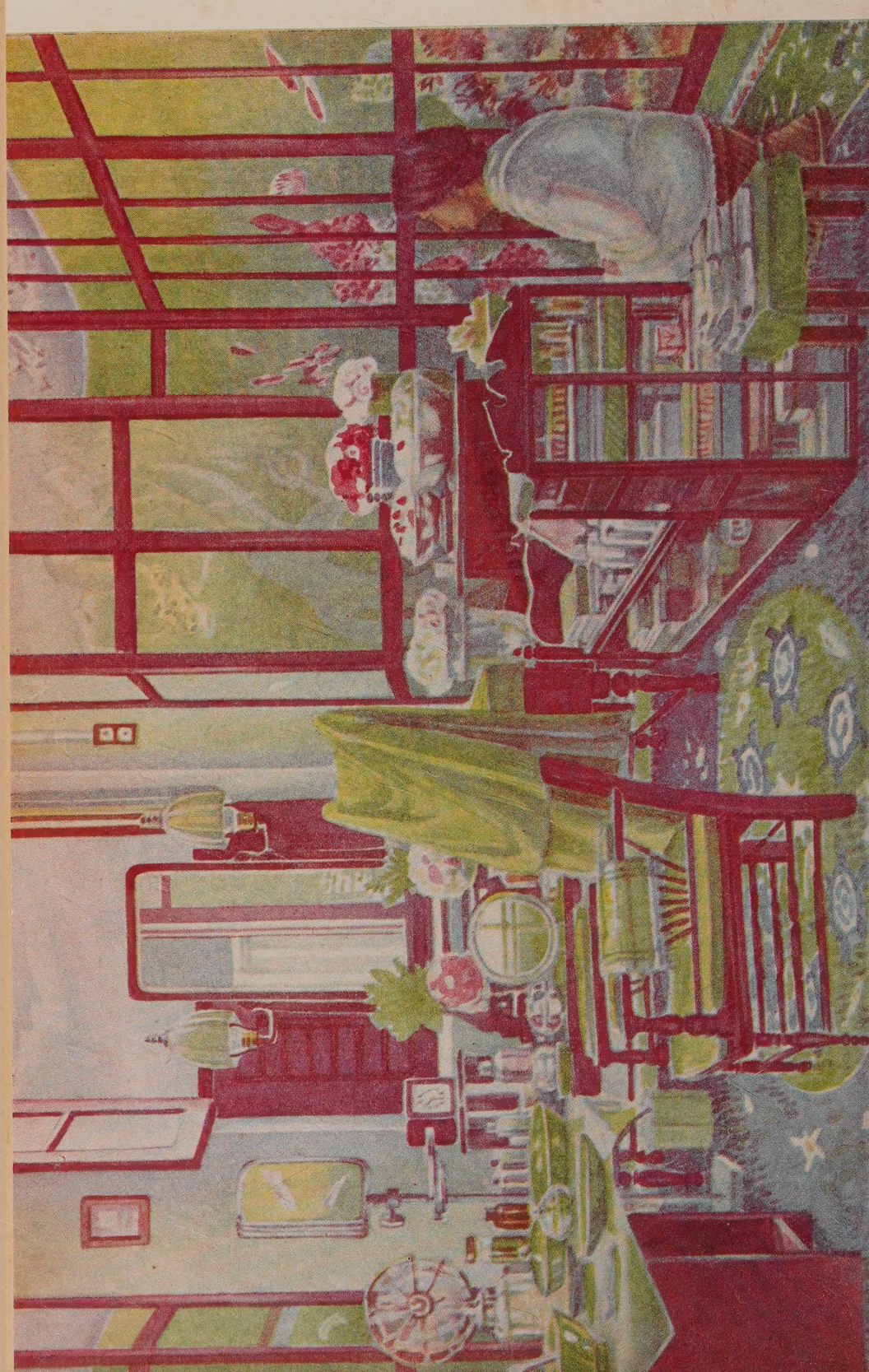
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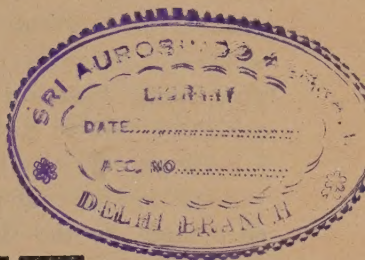
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One day I shall behold my great sweet world
Put off the dire disguises of the gods,
Unveil from terror and disrobe from sin.
Appeased we shall draw near our Mother's face,
We shall cast our candid souls upon her lap.

SAVITRI, BOOK X, CANTO II





THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - Sri Aurobindo.

EDITORIALS

LONE TO THE LONE

THE quintessence of spirituality is said to consist in, as has been described in the famous phrase of the Alexandrine mystic philosopher Plotinus, *the flight of the lone to the lone*. God is a solitary and the other solitary is the soul: so when one solitary mingles with the supreme solitary, the result is utter solitariness, which is spirituality at its apex, its highest height. The world, in this view, is an excrescence, an epiphenomenon—Illusion, Maya. God is the transcendent Reality, above and beyond all manifestation, negating all multiplicities and relativities of creation: He is indivisible, single, absolute unity—*ekamevadwitiyam*, *kevalam*—*neha nanasti kinchana*. The human being too is not in reality the individual person bounded within a body, life and mind formation, standing in reciprocal relations with such other formations; his inner core of truth and substance is a unitary centre of consciousness—*angushthamatra purusha*—which is aloof and apart from his apparent and assumed personality and has no dealings with such personalities. God has no *upadhi*, phenomenal qualification, neither has the soul of man. Therefore in his spiritual aspiration, man has to divest himself of all the outer growths that cover and bury his soul: with the clear unmixed vision of his pure soul he has to look straight into the face of the Divine Transcendent, shredded too of its cosmic

vesture, and rise from the station of ignorance, this level ground of clay to which it is pinned, and soar and fly and merge into the pure reality of the pure Spirit. Therefore it is said, naked we come into the vale of tears and naked we have to go back to our home. Or in terms of another imagery, it is the pure pouring into the pure, the full mixing into the full.

Some mystics and philosophers recently come into vogue (inspired or encouraged by the Christian or the Buddhist way of Realisation) have emphasised this outlook. But it has also been counterbalanced by another way of spiritual growth and fulfilment: we may call it the modern way, for it has been a pronounced characteristic of the modern consciousness. We referred in our previous number to the Existentialist who has attracted so much attention in these days, the linchpin of whose philosophy is the value of the individual person, especially the individual personal in relation to each other. Kierkegaard, the Danish mystic, from whom this school is supposed to originate, speaks of the Absolute as the Single One that excludes and annuls all "others", the crowd. He lays especial emphasis upon complete solitariness and total renunciation as the very condition, *sine qua non*, of the soul's spiritual journey and yet characterises the *singleness* of the one in terms that make of it an essential whole, an integer. Man must isolate himself from his phenomenal being, certainly—as the *neti neti* formula enjoins—but also he must first find or become his real self, realise his true individuality before he can reach God, the Divine Self, identify himself with the Transcendent. It is only a freely and truly formed individual being that can give itself to the Divine or become one with it. This true individuality is indeed a solitary being away and apart from the crowd of personalities that surround it—it has been called by the Indian mystics, the Purusha in the heart, no bigger than the thumb, the Dwarf Godhead (*Vamana*).

When one is a member of the crowd, he has no personality or individuality, he is an amorphous mass, moving helplessly in the current of life, driven by Nature-force as it pleases her: spiritual life begins by withdrawing oneself from this flow of Ignorance and building up or taking cognizance of one's true person and being. When one possesses oneself integrally, is settled in the armature of one's spirit self, he has most naturally turned away from the inferior personalities of his own being and the comradeship also of people in bondage and ignorance. But then one need not stop at this purely negative poise: one can move up and arrive at a positive status, a new revaluation and reaffirmation. For when the divine selfhood is attained, one is no longer sole or solitary. Indeed, the solitariness or loneliness that is attributed to the spiritual status is a human way of viewing the experience: that is the

impression left on the normal mind consciousness when the Purusha soars out of it, upwards from the life of the world to the life of the Spirit. But the soul, the true spiritual being in the individual, is not and cannot be an isolated entity; the nature of the spiritual consciousness is first transcendence, no doubt, transcendence of the merely temporal and ephemeral, but it is also universalisation, that is to say, the cosmic realisation that has its classic expression in the famous mantra of the Gita, *he who sees himself in other selves and other selves in his own self*. In that status "own" and "other" are not distinct or contrary things, but aspects of the one and the same reality, different stresses in one rhythm.

The flight then represents the freedom, the movement in height of the soul; but there is also the other, the horizontal movement leading to expansiveness and comprehension. One is transcendental, the other global or cosmic. First we have to reject, reject the false formations one by one (sheath by sheath, as it is described in the Upanishads) and arrive at the purest core of truth and reality; but again we have to come back, take up a new, the true formation. What was renounced has to be reintegrated in the divine becoming. While we are in Ignorance, our relations with men and the world are false and ignorant, but once we attain our true self, we find the same self in men and things and we have no more revulsion for them—*tato na vijigupsate*.

PROF. DAS AND KNOWLEDGE BY IDENTITY*

Sri Aurobindo says, knowledge—true knowledge—comes always by identity, i.e., when you are identified with the object, when the knower and the known are one. He further adds that even ordinary knowledge, sense-perception, comes in fact by that way, although it may look otherwise, viz., as a process of logical induction or deduction or both. When I am angry, he illustrates, I know I am angry because I become anger or when I know I am existent, it is because I am one with my existence.

Prof. Das seeks to controvert the position. He says, when there is complete identity there is no knowledge. If I am wholly one with the object, I get merged and lost in it. When I become a thing, I no longer know the thing. If I know a thing, it means the thing is separate from me, in front of me; the relation of subject-object is the very essence, the *sine qua non* of all knowledge. Taking up the illustration, Prof. Das says: If I know I am angry, it clearly shows that I and my anger are separate entities; similarly, I know I exist, it too shows that I am separate, partially at least, from my

existence, that is to say, as knower transcendent to the object known. In knowing there cannot thus be complete identity.

Prof. Das evidently holds the orthodox, rather rigid, Sankhya position, viz., the Purusha or witness is always separate from Prakriti, its object. But after all this is only a standpoint, there are other standpoints equally valid and more comprehensive. Sri Aurobindo holds in this respect what may be generically called the Vedantic position where the basic epistemological principle is that the knower and the known (*jñata* and *jñeya*) are fused together in knowledge (*jñana*). One Vedantic line, it is true however, seems to arrive at a different conclusion, for thus it is asserted, where there is absolute identity, who is it that sees or knows or what is it that is seen or known! But this is only one aspect of the phenomenon.

When the Upanishad says, one who knows Brahman becomes Brahman, does it not mean that the very condition of knowing Brahman is to become it? Indeed, there is no contradiction or incommensurability between knowing and becoming, between (what is termed by the mystic as) *Knowledge* and *Realisation*. Consciousness has a twofold power, Sri Aurobindo says: the power of apprehension and the power of comprehension—*prajnana* and *vijnana*. *Prajnana*, the apprehending consciousness, sets the object in front, away and separate from itself and contemplates it: *Vijnana*, the comprehending consciousness, on the other hand, comprehends, embraces the object within itself, as part of its own being. The two are not distinct or incompatible movements, they go together and form one single movement of consciousness. It is the mind, the reason that makes the separation; it is not possible for the mind to view two things simultaneously. It is because of this incapacity of the mind, married to its logic of the finite, that Sri Aurobindo points out the way of correcting it by a higher supramental power which operates in a global way.

Let us go back to our illustration. I am angry means both I am anger and I know I have anger. It is true in fact and experience. Similarly I am (existent) means both I am existence and I know I am existent. The transcendence of the subject (of which Prof. Das speaks) is nothing but the poise of the consciousness as the apprehending Purusha: it does not negate or exclude identification, which is another arm of a biune process. The two are complementary to each other. Also Purusha and Prakriti are not contradictories, not mutually exclusive; they are dual aspects or dispositions of the same consciousness or self-conscious reality. Consciousness involved and lost to itself and in itself is Prakriti, consciousness evolved and looking out at itself is Purusha. I am aware of myself and I am myself are two ways of saying the same thing. We imagine Shakespeare expressed

the experience graphically and poetically when he made his character say :

“Richard loves Richard, that is I am I”.

In seeking to disvalue the principle of identity as a fundamental element in knowing, Prof. Das brings in to witness on his side the logical copula. Some logicians, of course, assert a parallelism if not identity between the laws of thought and the laws of language, language being conceived as the very image—a photograph—of thought. But the truth of the matter is that it is and it is not so, as in many other things. However, here when it is stated that the copula disjoining the subject and the predicate is the very pattern of all process of knowledge, one mistakes, we are afraid, a scheme or a formula, for the thing itself, a way of understanding a fact for the fact itself. Such a formula for understanding, however it may be valid for more or less analytical languages, those of later growth, need not and did not have the same propriety in respect of other older languages. We know the evolution of language has been in the direction of more and more disjunction of its component limbs even like the progression of the human mind and intellect. The modern analytical languages with their army of independent prepositions have taken the place of the classical languages which were predominantly inflexional. The Greek and Latin started the independent prepositional forms in the form of a fundamentally inflexional structure. Still further back, in Sanskrit for example, the inflexional form reigns supreme. Prefixes and affixes served the role of prepositions. And if we move further backward, the synthetic movement is so complete that the logical components (the subject, the copula, the predicate) are fused together into one symbol (the chinese ideogram). We are here nearer to the original nature and pattern of knowledge—a single homogeneous movement of apperception. There is no sanctity or absoluteness in the logical disposition of thought structure; the Aristotelian makes it a triplicity, the Indian Nyaya would extend the dissection to five or seven limbs. But whatever the logical presentation, the original psychological movement is a single indivisible élan—and the Vedantic fusion of the knower, the knowledge and the known in identity remains the fundamental fact.

THE PLACE OF REASON

Another point in Sri Aurobindo's view of consciousness which troubles Prof. Das is about the exact nature and function of Reason. For while

on one side Sri Aurobindo never seems to be tired of pointing out the inherent incapacity of Reason—in the good company of the ancient Rishis—as an instrument for the discovery or realisation of the Absolute or the integral Reality, he asserts, on the other hand, almost in the same breath as it were, that mind can have some idea or conception of what is beyond it, which it so often vainly strives to seize or represent. Evidently, the rationalist logic fails to hold together the two ends, as it is further seen in Prof. Das's failure to perceive any distinction between types or gradations of "thinking".¹ He thinks that just as a philosopher thinks, or a cabman thinks or an animal thinks, all must think in the same way and through the same function of the same organ: either there is thinking (thinking proper, of one particular kind) or there is no thinking. That Nature consists of a graduated scale in every line of its movements, and that the gradations shade off into each other—not only so but that each scale or principle may contain within itself all the others²—is a phenomenon which runs contrary to the "either this or that" or "no-overlapping" principle. like the colour blind for whom things are either black or white. In the global outlook, however, we do not stand in the relation of division, separation, mutual exclusiveness. There is a consciousness in which all contraries find a harmonising truth and rhythm.

In Sri Aurobindo Reason and Intuition possess a dual relation of mutual negation and mutual affirmation, of exclusiveness and inclusiveness, as indeed is the relation of Brahman and the World. One negates the other in the sphere of ignorance but in knowledge one affirms the other. That is to say, Reason or mental logic, so long as it is dominated by the senses, by the external impressions from things and by its analytic or exclusively separative method of procedure, is a denial of Intuition and a bar to spiritual experience. But Reason can be purified, relieved of its dross, illumined (*sambuddha*)—sublimated and uplifted—then it comes to its own, becomes what it really is and should be—a frame to give body to what is beyond and unembodied, a mirror in conceptual terms what is supra-

¹ *Calcutta Review*, January 1949.

² Thus, take the principles of Matter, life and mind. They are separate and distinct from one point of view—the logical and practical. But life came out of matter, and then mind out of life—that is the evolutionary conception. In other words matter shades off into life, there is a point where it is difficult to say whether it is matter or life; similarly there is a point where life shades off into mind, where mind and life are fused together. We can further say that in matter there is a life and there is a mind, and in life there is a matter and mind and in mind too there is a matter and a life. But these facts of Nature are disconcerting to the one-track of the logical philosopher and make the confusion worse confounded for him.

conceptual. It loses its hard rigidity and becomes supple, loses its obscurity, density and becomes transparent: it attains a new rhythm and gait and capacity. Many of the Upanishadic mantras, a good part of the Gita, do that. And Sri Aurobindo's own exposition is a miracle in that style. "Reason was a helper, Reason is the bar"—and, we can add, Reason will again be an aid. The world as it is is anything but Divine; and yet it is nothing but the Divine essentially and fundamentally; it can and will attain the divine figure apparently and externally too. Even so with regard to man's mind and reason and all his other limbs.

Peace in the physical cells leads first to health and then to transformation.

* * *

Advance on the way with *peace in the physical being* as your ground and *simple sincerity* as your means, and sooner or later you are bound to reach *Identification with the Divine Consciousness*.

* * *

Surrender to the Divine and integral transformation are the two great steps leading to the new *perfect creation*.

* * *

HERE AND NOW

WHY, Soul, look ever ahead to the unborn gods?
 The flute of the future can pour its goldenest honey
 Even now if the ear is tuned to the inmost hush.
 The ecstatic end is each instant: here on thy brow
 Sit all the epiphanies. Lustres that gather
 Today are no flowerless path to paradise,
 But a music and mystery hiding every heaven
 Washed by the secret waves of prophecy.
 Lovely the rainbowed horizon, the shimmering heart
 Of the dreaming distance, but to live afar
 Is blindness toward the deeps of wine within!...

Leaping below to unbottomed bliss, the gap
 Twixt throb and aching throb of the pulse of life
 Crypts in a Calm that is mother of the worlds
 The whole future's farness of the-unblown rose!
 Vast over thee the noon is everywhere:
 An upward tunnel opens through the sun
 To expanses that have never known a name
 Nor broken with the faintest gossamer wing.
 All the great Gods are waiting thy finger flames
 To rise and reach and taste with ten white tongues.
 Straight runs the shaft of the flawless infinite hour
 From pinnacle to abyss in a sheathèd Now.
 O the dark waste of this sweet pillar of gold,
 A crystal python vertically hung
 From burning mouth to burning tail, with a body
 Plunging like groove on groove through endless light!
 Timeless is the nectar laughing in that jar
 Moment by moment: if never hast thou seen
 That fullness in thy form, barren thy life
 And a wide mirage the call of coming dawns!

K. D. SETHNA

ON PHYSICAL CULTURE

(A MESSAGE FROM SRI AUROBINDO)

I TAKE the opportunity of the publication of this issue of the "Bulletin d'Éducation Physique" of the Ashram to give my blessings to the Journal and the Association—J.S.A.S.A. (Jeunesse Sportive de l'Ashram de Sri Aurobindo). In doing so I would like to dwell for a while on the deeper *raison d'être* of such Associations and especially the need and utility for the nation of a widespread organisation of them and such sports or physical exercises as are practised here. In their more superficial aspect they appear merely as games and amusements which people take up for entertainment or as a field for the outlet of the body's energy and natural instinct of activity or for a means of the development and maintenance of the health and strength of the body; but they are or can be much more than that: they are also fields for the development of habits, capacities and qualities which are greatly needed and of the utmost service to a people in war or in peace, and in its political and social activities, in most indeed of the provinces of a combined human endeavour. It is to this which we may call the national aspect of the subject that I would wish to give especial prominence.

In our own time these sports, games and athletics have assumed a place and command a general interest such as was seen only in earlier times in countries like Greece, Greece where all sides of human activity were equally developed and the gymnasium, chariot-racing and other sports and athletics had the same importance on the physical side as on the mental side the Arts and poetry and the drama, and were especially stimulated and attended to by the civic authorities of the City State. It was Greece that made an institution of the Olympiad and the recent re-establishment of the Olympiad as an international institution is a significant sign of the revival of the ancient spirit. This kind of interest has spread to a certain extent to our own country, and India has begun to take a place in international contests such as the Olympiad. The newly founded State in liberated India is also beginning to be interested in developing all sides of the life of the nation and is likely to take an active part and a habit of direction in fields which were formerly left to private initiative. It is taking up, for instance, the question of the foundation and preservation of health and physical fitness in the nation and in the spreading of a general recog-

nition of its importance. It is in this connection that the encouragement of sports and associations for athletics and all activities of this kind would be an incalculable assistance. A generalisation of the habit of taking part in such exercises in childhood and youth and early manhood would help greatly towards the creation of physically fit and energetic people.

But of a higher import than the foundation, however necessary, of health, strength and fitness of the body is the development of discipline and morale and sound and strong character towards which these activities can help. There are many sports which are of the utmost value towards this end, because they help to form and even necessitate the qualities of courage, hardihood, energetic action and initiative or call for skill, steadiness of will or rapid decision and action, the perception of what is to be done in an emergency and dexterity in doing it. One development of the utmost value is the awakening of the essential and instinctive body consciousness which can see and do what is necessary without any indication from mental thought and which is equivalent in the body to swift insight in the mind and spontaneous and rapid decision in the will. One may add the formation of a capacity for harmonious and right movements of the body, especially in a combined action, economic of physical effort and discouraging waste of energy, which result from such exercises as marches or drill and which displace the loose and straggling, the inharmonious or disorderly or wasteful movements common to the untrained individual body. Another invaluable result of these activities is the growth of what has been called the sporting spirit. That includes good humour and tolerance and consideration for all, a right attitude and friendliness to competitors and rivals, self-control and scrupulous observance of the laws of the game, fair play and avoidance of the use of foul means, an equal acceptance of victory or defeat without bad humour, resentment or ill-will towards successful competitors, loyal acceptance of the decisions of the appointed judge, umpire or referee. These qualities have their value for life in general and not only for sport, but the help that sport can give to their development is direct and invaluable. If they could be made more common not only in the life of the individual but in the national life and in the international where at the present day the opposite tendencies have become too rampant, existence in this troubled world of ours would be smoother and might open to a greater chance of concord and amity of which it stands very much in need. More important still is the custom of discipline, obedience, order, habit of team-work, which certain games necessitate. For, without them success is uncertain or impossible. Innumerable are the activities in life, especially in national life, in which leadership and obedience to

leadership in combined action are necessary for success, victory in combat or fulfilment of a purpose. The role of the leader, the captain, the power and skill of his leadership, his ability to command the confidence and ready obedience of his followers is of the utmost importance in all kinds of combined action or enterprise; but few can develop these things without having learnt themselves to obey and to act as one mind or as one body with others. This strictness of training, this habit of discipline and obedience is not inconsistent with individual freedom; it is often the necessary condition for its right use, just as order is not inconsistent with liberty but rather the condition for the right use of liberty and even for its preservation and survival. In all kinds of concerted action this rule is indispensable: orchestration becomes necessary and there could be no success for an orchestra in which individual musicians played according to their own fancy and refused to follow the indications of the conductor. In spiritual things also the same rule holds; a sadhak who disregarded the guidance of the Guru and preferred the untrained inspirations of the novice could hardly escape the stumbles or even the disasters which so often lie thick around the path to spiritual realisation. I need not enumerate the other benefits which can be drawn from the training that sport can give or dwell on their use in the national life; what I have said is sufficient. At any rate, in schools like ours and in universities sports have now a recognised and indispensable place; for even a highest and completest education of the mind is not enough without the education of the body. Where the qualities I have enumerated are absent or insufficiently present, a strong individual will or a national will may build them up, but the aid given by sports to their development is direct and in no way negligible. This would be a sufficient reason for the attention given to them in our Ashram, though there are others which I need not mention here. I am concerned here with their importance and the necessity of the qualities they create or stimulate for our national life. The nation which possesses them in the highest degree is likely to be the strongest for victory, success and greatness, but also for the contribution it can make towards the bringing about of unity and a more harmonious world order towards which we look as our hope for humanity's future.

December 30, 1948

SRI AUROBINDO

A DEFENCE OF INDIAN CULTURE*

(3)

REDUCED to the bareness of the essential ideas, these are the principal lines upon which the structure of Indian civilisation was founded; they constitute the power of its conception of life. I do not think it can be said that there is an inferiority in them to any human culture or any human conception of life that has ever held sway over the mind of man in historic times. There is nothing that can be said to discourage life and its flowering or deprive it of impetus and elevation and great motive, but, on the contrary, a full and frank recognition and examination of the whole of human existence in all its range and power and variety, a clear and wise and noble idea for its right government and ideal tendency, a magnificent call to a highest possible greatness and perfection. These are the serious uses of culture, the things that raise the life of man above a crude, primitive barbarism, and if a civilisation is to be judged by the power of its ideas, their power for these great uses, Indian civilisation was inferior to none. I will not say that it was absolutely complete,—that can be alleged of no past or present cultural idea or system; man is inwardly an infinite being, in his mind and life he is continually growing, with whatever stumblings and long relapses, and he cannot be permanently bound in any one system of ideas or frame of living. His structures are incomplete and provisional; even those which seem the most comprehensive lose their force to stand and are convicted by time of insufficiency. But this at least can be said of the Indian idea that it seized with a remarkable depth and comprehensiveness upon the main truths and needs of the whole human being, his mind and life and body, his artistic and ethical and intellectual being, his soul and spirit, and gave them a subtle and liberal, a profoundly large and high and wise, a sympathetic and yet a nobly arduous direction. More cannot be said for any past or existing civilisation.

But besides the governing and inspiring ideas there must be in any culture aiming at completeness a harmony of forms and rhythms, a mould into which the ideas and the life can run. Here we must be prepared for a lesser perfection, a greater incompleteness. And the reason is that the spirit is vaster than its ideas, the ideas larger than their forms, moulds

and rhythms. Form has a certain fixity which limits; no form can exhaust or fully give the potentialities of the ideas that gave it birth; that is the secret of their need of mutation. The idea itself is only a partial expression of the spirit; it has to become more supple, to fill itself out with other views, to rise and broaden to new applications, often to lose itself in uplifting transformations of its own meaning into vaster significances or fuse itself into new and richer syntheses. In the history of all great cultures we find a passage through three periods, a period of large and loose formation, a period in which we see a fixing of forms, moulds, rhythms, a period of superannuation, decay, disintegration. This last stage is the crisis in the life of a civilisation; if it cannot transform itself, it enters into a slow lingering decline or else collapses in a death agony brought about by the rapid impact of stronger and more immediately living, though not necessarily greater or truer, powers or formations; but if it is able to shake itself free of limiting forms, to renovate its ideas, to give a new scope to its spirit, to understand, master and assimilate novel growths and necessities, then there is a rebirth, a true renaissance, a fresh lease of life and expansion.

Indian civilisation went in a large and leisurely manner through all these stages. Its first period was that of a great spiritual outflowing in which the forms were supple, flexible, freely responsive to its essential spirit; that passed into an age of strong intellectuality fixing itself into distinct, sufficiently complex, but largely treated and still supple forms and rhythms. Then came a period of richly crystallised fixity, of crises met partly by a change of ideas and modification of forms; but the hard binding of forms triumphed and a decline of the spirit, a stagnation of living force, a progressive decay of the outward structure set in, accompanied and hastened by the impact of other cultures. Today we are in the midst of a violent crisis, which began by the threat of a death and destruction of the culture, but is now uplifted by the strong hope of a great revival, transmutation and renaissance. If we would understand the essential spirit of Indian civilisation, we must go back to the earliest period of the Vedas and Upanishads. If we would study the fixed forms of its spirit, the thing it eventually realised as the basic rhythm of its life, we have to look with an observing eye at the later middle period of the Shastras and the classic writings and sciences and philosophies. If we would discover its limitations, the points at which it stopped short and failed to develop its whole spirit and the directions it must follow in its transmutation, we have to consider its period of decline and crisis of renaissance. None of these can be cut clean apart from each other, for what developed in one period is already forecast and begun in the age that preceded it, but still on a certain

large and imprecise scale we can make these distinctions. At present we are only concerned with the developed forms and the principal rhythms.

The problem which Indian culture had to solve was that of a firm outward basis on which to found the practical development of its spirit and idea in life,—how to take the natural life of man and, while allowing it sufficient scope and freedom and variety, yet to subject it to a law, canon, dharma, a law of function, a law of type, a law of each human tendency, a law too of highest ideal intention, and again to point that dharma towards its own exceeding by the fulfilment and cessation of its disciplinary purpose in the secure freedom of a spiritual living. From an early stage it seized upon a double idea for its own guidance which it threw into a basic system of the individual life in the frame of the society; this was the double order of the *chaturvarnya*, the system of the four classes, and the Ashramas, the four stages of the developing life. The ancient Chaturvarnya must not be judged by its later disintegrated degeneration and gross meaningless parody, the caste system, neither was it precisely the system of the classes which we find in other civilisations, the priesthood, nobility, merchant-class and serfs or labourers. It may have had outwardly the same starting-point, but it was given a very different significance.

The Indian idea was that man falls by his nature into four types, the man of learning and knowledge, the man of power and action, the economic man, producer and wealth-getter,—these were the twice-born, who received the initiation,—and the more undeveloped type of the mere unintellectual worker, the man fit only for unskilled labour and menial service, Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra. The economical order of society was cast in this form; the Brahmin class was called upon to give the community its priests, thinkers, men of letters, legists, scholars, religious leaders and guides, the Kshatriya its kings, warriors, governors and administrators, the Vaishya its merchants, producers, agriculturists, craftsmen, artisans, the Shudra its menials and servants. So far there was nothing very peculiar in this system except the supreme position given to religion, thought and learning, and that even may be paralleled from certain other early civilisations. The Indian idea in its purity fixed indeed the status of a man in this order not by his birth, but by his nature and capacities, and if this rule had been strictly held to, that would have been a very marked element of distinctness and superiority. But to order the society upon this finer psychological basis would have been in those times a difficult thing,—for even at the best, society being always something of a machine, gravitates towards the material sign and standard,—and we find that in practice birth became the basis of the Varna. At no time was the adherence to the

economic rule quite absolute; the early ages show a considerable flexibility which was not quite lost in the process of complex crystallisation, and even in the greater rigidity of the caste system there has been in practice a confusion of economic functions. The vitality of a vigorous community cannot obey at every point the indications of a cut pattern and tradition. The material side of an idea or system has too always its weaknesses, and the defect of such systems is that they stiffen into a fixed hierarchy which cannot maintain permanently its purity or its utility, but becomes a soulless form and prolongs itself in a state of corruption or degeneracy or oppressive formalism when the uses that justified it are no longer in existence or can no longer be made consistent with the developing needs of the growth of humanity. Indian society did not escape this general law; it was overtaken by these deficiencies, lost the true sense of the thing with which it set out, degenerated into a chaos of castes and developed evils which we are now much embarrassed to eliminate. But it was a well-devised and necessary scheme in its time, it gave the community the firm and nobly built stability it needed for the security of its cultural development and, as interpreted by the Indian genius, it became a greater thing than an economical, political and social mechanism.

The real greatness of the Indian system of the four Varnas did not lie in its well-ordered division of economical function; it consisted in the ethical and spiritual contents which the thinkers and builders of the society poured into these forms. They started with the idea of the intellectual, ethical and spiritual growth of the individual as the principal need of humanity, society as its necessary framework and its system of relations. A secure place had to be found for him in the community from which he could serve these relations, maintain and pay all his debt to the society and proceed to his self-development with the best possible help from the communal life. This place they conceived as one provided for him by the indications of his capacity, temperament and nature. Birth was taken in practice as the first test; the heredity was of a high importance; it was taken even in later thought as a sign of the nature and the needed surroundings which the individual had prepared for himself by his past soul-development in former existences. But birth was not considered as the sole test of Varna. The intellectual capacity, the turn of the temperament, the ethical nature, the spiritual elevation were the important things. A rule of the family living, of individual observance and self-training, of upbringing and education was provided which was intended to bring out these essential things. They trained the individual in the capacities, habits, attainments, sense of honour and duty necessary for the discharge of his function in life; they

equipped him with the science of the thing he had to do, the best way to succeed in it as an interest, *artha*; they fitted him to attain to the highest rule, canon, recognised perfection of the activity suited to his capacity, whether economical, political, sacerdotal, literary, scholastic or whatever else it might be; even the most despised pursuits had their education, their law and canon, their ambition of success, their dignity of a standard of perfection, and became in a certain degree a means of self-finding and ordered self-satisfaction. And in addition there were the general accomplishments, sciences, arts, graces of life, which satisfied the intellectual, aesthetic and hedonistic powers of the being; they were many, various, taught with minuteness, thoroughness and subtlety and available to all men of culture.

But while all this was provided for, the spirit of Indian culture said to the individual: "This is only the substructure, of a pressing importance indeed, but still not the last and greatest thing; when you have paid your debt to society, filled well and admirably your place in its life, helped its maintenance and continuity and taken from it your legitimate and desired satisfactions, there still remains the greatest thing of all, your own self, the inner you, the soul which is a portion of or one with the eternal and universal Being. This you have to find, and from the place I have provided for you in life and by this training you can find it; for to each Varna I have supplied its highest ideal of manhood, the highest way of which your nature is capable. By directing your life and nature in its own law of being, its Swadharma, towards that perfection you can grow into the ideal universal nature which is nearest to the nature of Divinity. That is the greater real object before you. For from that basis you can by the liberating knowledge which leads to the spiritual release, *moksha*, grow out of all these limitations in which you are being trained, grow through the fulfilled Dharma and beyond it into the eternity of your self, the fullness, freedom, greatness, bliss of the immortal spirit that each man is behind the veils of his nature. When you have done that you are free; then you have gone beyond all the Dharmas; then you are a universal soul, one with all existence, and can either act in that divine liberty for the good of all living things or turn to enjoy in solitude the bliss of eternity." Thus the whole system of society, founded on the four Varnas, was made a harmonious means for the elevation and progress of the soul in man from the natural pursuit of interest and desire to the perfection of the law of his nature, Dharma, and from that to the highest spiritual freedom. His end in life was this self-realisation of his own immortal, infinite and eternal being.

But the Indian system did not entirely leave this growth to the individual's unaided inner initiative; it gave him a framework, a scale and

gradation for his life in that sense; this high convenience was the object of the four Ashramas. Life was divided into four natural periods of the working out of this cultural idea of living, the stage of the student, the stage of the householder, the stage of the recluse or forest-dweller, the stage of the free supersocial man, *parivrājaka*. The student life was so framed as to lay the groundwork by a thorough training not only in the necessary arts, sciences, branches of knowledge, but in the discipline of the ethical nature and a grounding in the Vedic spiritual knowledge. The training was given in the earlier days in suitable surroundings far away from the life of cities under one who had himself passed through the round of the circle of living and arrived at some realisation of the spiritual knowledge; subsequently it became more mundane and was imparted in cities and universities. Thus from the beginning the Aryan man was prepared for the four great objects of his life, *artha*, *kāma*, *dharma*, *moksha*. He entered into the householder stage to live out his knowledge, serve the three first objects, satisfying his natural being and paying his debt to society, and prepare himself by the way he discharged them for the last greatest purpose of his existence. In the third stage he retired to the forest, there to work out within himself the truth of his spirit in a broad freedom from the stricter social bonds, while at the same time he left his knowledge to the new rising generation as an educator of men. Finally, he was free to throw off even his last remaining ties and wander over the world in a spiritual detachment from all the forms of social life and all but the barest necessities, communing with the universal Spirit and making his soul ready for eternity. The circle must not be considered as obligatory on all; there were many no doubt, the great majority, who never went beyond the two first stages, many who passed away in the *vānaprastha* or forest stage; only the few took up the life of the *parivrājaka*. But it gave a scheme which kept the full course of the human spirit in its view and could be taken advantage of by all who were sufficiently developed in this birth to complete the circle.

On this first firm and noble basis Indian civilisation grew to its maturity. While it filled the view with the last mountain prospect of the highest spiritual elevation, it did not neglect the life of the levels; it lived between the city and village and the forest and overarching illimitable ether; moving firmly between life and death it saw beyond both to immortality; it developed nature to draw it into the self and enriched life to raise it into the spirit. So founded, so trained, the ancient Indian race grew to astonishing heights of culture and civilisation, lived with a noble, well-founded, ample and vigorous order and freedom, developed a great literature, sciences,

arts, crafts, industries, rose to high ideals of knowledge and culture, arduous greatness and heroism, kindness, philanthropy and human unity, laid the inspired basis of wonderful spiritual philosophies, examined the secrets of Nature and of the inner being, discovered the profoundest truths of self and the world, Purusha and Prakriti. As civilisation grew in richness and complexity, it lost the first grand simplicity of its early order; intellect towered and widened, as intuition waned; a greater stress came to be laid on scientific system, accuracy and order in all the things of the life and mind and even of the spirit; the free flood of intuitive knowledge was forced to run in hewn channels; society became less free and noble, more artificial and complex, more of a bond on the individual and less of a field for the growth of his spiritual faculties; the old fine integral harmony gave place to an exaggerated stress on one or other of its elements; *artha* and *kāma*, interest and desire were in some directions developed even at the expense of the *dharma*; the lines of the *dharma* were filled and stamped in with so rigid a distinctness as to stand in the way of the freedom of the spirit; *moksha*, liberation, was pursued in hostility to life and not as its orbed result and crowning. But still some strong basis of the old knowledge remained to inspire and harmonise. Even when a slow collapse came and the life of the community degenerated into a sort of uneasily petrified ignorance and confusion, the old spiritual aim, the ancient tradition, remained to sweeten, humanise, save in the worst days the Indian peoples, recurred continually in high outbursts of energy, and now rises once more in all its strength to give the impulse of a great renaissance.

(To be continued)

SRI AUROBINDO

ORACLES OF LIFE*

THE watchword of the atomic age would appear to be, 'Hush up the Humanities!' What have we to do with Vyasa and Valmiki, Homer and Dante, Kalidasa and Shakespeare? As for the obscure makers of myths and tellers of tales, oh name them not, it is criminal to waste our time on them! The prejudice against the Humanities is, perhaps, a temporary phenomenon and will presently go the way of all prejudices. The prejudice may, on the contrary, harden itself into a core of faith and destroy life's savour and significance. All honour in the meantime to those who bravely reaffirm their humanistic faith and look up to the wise old poets with reverence and gratitude.

Dr. Heinrich Zimmer calls himself a 'dilettante', but the word should be construed in no derogatory sense. He would be a 'dilettante' because it would be absurd and fruitless to approach the 'symbols' of old myth and legend with the scalpel and syringe of scientific scrutiny. The mere scientist and psychologist is apt to look upon epic and romance, myth and fairy tale, as dead survivals from the historic past, to be anatomized, systematized, and classified. Dr. Zimmer, on the other hand, would treat them as living things and readily sit down with them "for an extended chat". This experience has made him realize that Homer and Vyasa and the rest of them are "the everlasting oracles of life". But oracles talk a riddling language—the meaning is clear and yet not too clear, and different shades of meaning may be read into it by different men. This is the reason why age does not wither the vogue of these ancient tales and why fresh brewed fashions do not stale their old-world magic and infinite variety. They are of all time, and they have a meaning for every age:

"They have to be questioned and consulted anew, with every age, each age approaching them with its own variety of ignorance and understanding, its own set of problems, and its own inevitable questions. For the life patterns that we of today have to weave are not the same as those of any other day; the threads to be manipulated and the knots to be disentangled differ greatly from those of the past. The replies already given, therefore, cannot be made to serve us. The powers have to be consulted again directly—again, again, and again.

* *The King and the Corpse. Tales of the Soul's Conquest of Evil.* By Heinrich Zimmer. Edited by Joseph Campbell. Six Plates. (The Bollingen Series).

Our primary task is to learn, not so much what they are said to have said, as how to approach them, evoke fresh speech from them, and understand that speech."

Dr. Zimmer's own approach to "the powers" is both reverent and friendly, while his interpretation of their "speech" is illuminating and convincing.

Dr. Zimmer's collection of tales, drawn from the West no less than the East, is purposefully held together by the tenuous silk ribbon of a running commentary and also the inner tension of a continuous argument. These stories—call them myths, legends, fairy tales, what you will—properly belong to the childhood of the human race. And even as the child is father of the man, these stories are the progenitors of our adult civilizations, our religions, philosophies, literatures. The same story that amuses the forward child and lulls him to sleep, only tantalizes youth, makes manhood wistful, and old age serene. The meaning of these stories is thus no commensurable precise quantity but a phenomenon of infinite extension—and yet, while Infinity may be scooped from Infinity, the residue will be Infinity still! So it is with these wise old stories which are a fusion of meaning and mystery, logic and magic; and if we approach them in the right attitude, we shall see through the veil of symbols and we shall decipher the formulas of speech. With Dr. Zimmer for our guide let us begin anew the adventure of interpretation, and without question "the wonderful seeds from the past will strike their roots and marvellously grow."

Dr. Zimmer's collection begins with the story of Abu Kasem's slippers, from the *Thammarat-ul-Awrak* of Ibn Hijjat-al-Hamawi. These oft patched-up slippers are, in fact, the bank balance of Abu's self-forged Karma,—a thing not to be got rid of at will! Again and again and yet again the slippers return to distracted Abu, to his mounting discomfiture. Are we quite so sure that we too haven't, every one of us, our respective bank balances in Karma's strong box—a mansion or a memory, a sword or a signet, a pen or a pin? Excessive attachment, then, is the symptom of the soul's disease and slavery. "The air", says Dr. Zimmer, "is filled with such minute dust particles of fate; they form the atmosphere of life and all its events". Inadvertently we collide against some of these "whirling atoms of possibilities", and they and we fuse into a fateful pattern. The ring of Polycrates, the handkerchief in *Othello*, the apple in Massinger's *Emperor of the East*, King Dushyanta's ring, the wild duck in Ibsen's play,—how these things, trivial in appearance, worm themselves into the intricate fabric of human lives! Dr. Zimmer's diagnosis of this chronic human malady is as follows:

"In so far as he admits that a thing concerns him, it does concern him, and if related to his deepest aims and desires, his fears and the cloudy fabric of his thoughts, it can become an important part of his destiny. And, finally, if he senses it as striking at the roots of life, that very fact itself is his point of vulnerability. But, on the other hand, and by the same token, in so far as one can break loose from one's passions and ideas and thereby become free of oneself, one is released automatically from all the things that appear to be accidental...There are two mirror worlds, and the human being is between them: the world outside and the one within. They are like two Magdeburg hemispheres, between which the air has been pumped out and whose edges cling together by suction, so that all the king's horses cannot pry them apart. What binds the two externally—inclination, repulsion, intellectual interest—is the reflection of an inner tension, of which we are not readily aware because we are ourselves within ourselves, whether we will or no."

Release from bondage has to come from *within*, and automatically release will be achieved in the outer world. Through attachment—or false attachment—comes bondage; root out the cause, and the bondage disappears at once.

The stories of Conn-eda, the pagan prince, and John Chrysostom, the Christian saint, drive home the lesson that mere innocence is not enough, it is but a frail armour; it is through the shocks of evil that maturity comes. Siddhartha's sheltered existence within the four walls of the Palace of Pleasure was no more than a fragile soap bubble which crashed into atoms at the first contact with Pain. The way to the Bodhi Tree was a long and tortuous affair, but true illumination was to come to the prince in no other way. "The function of evil", says Dr. Zimmer, "is to keep in operation the dynamics of change. Co-operating with the beneficent forces, though antagonistically, those of evil thus assist in the weaving of the tapestry of life; hence the experience of evil, and to some extent this experience alone, produces maturity, real life, real command of the powers and tasks of life. The forbidden fruit—the fruit of guilt through experience, knowledge through experience—had to be swallowed in the Garden of Innocence before human history could begin. Evil had to be accepted and assimilated, not avoided." Conn-eda owes his successful probation to his stepmother's perfidy—seeming accidents determine his sense of direction—and when he returns after his graduation in the school of experience, evil in the person of his stepmother is eliminated in a trice. John Chrysostom's experience

of evil is more conscious, more direct, and his redemption is likewise self-willed and self-accomplished. John Golden-Mouth is a miraculous child, but he will not accept priestly eminence as a gift but will rather strive for it, with humility, sincerity, honesty, and unselfishness, and by his own exertions—if it be God's will—prove himself worthy of it. He is tempted, he resists for a while, he falls into sin; then the slow and painful process of redemption begins; and when at last he returns to sanctity, he has become worthy of his new mission as a Redeemer.

The next section covers four romances from the Cycle of King Arthur—viz., Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, Sir Owain and the Lady of the Fountain, Sir Lancelot and Sir Galahad, and Merlin the Master Magician and Niniane his mistress. The story of Sir Gawain illustrates the truth that to save one's life one must be ready to lose it—to occupy the sunlit heights one must be ready to wade through the valley of the dark shadow. The Green Knight—who is he but Death himself accoutred as a knight, Yama or Dharmaraja in romantic trappings? The long vigil and pursuit over, Savitri receives from Yama a fresh lease of life for her lord, Satyavan. The harrowing ordeal over, Sir Gawain returns with the precious talisman, the green girdle of the colour of death. Dr. Zimmer refers also to other variations of the Gawain legend, of which one is especially suggestive. Sir Gawain's adventure with Dame Regnelle is the familiar legend of Beauty and the Beast, with the roles as it were reversed. Dr. Zimmer quotes these words of Novalis, which particularly apply to such a story as Sir Gawain and Dame Regnelle:

“It is a significant trait of many fairy tales that the moment one impossible thing becomes possible, simultaneously another impossible thing becomes unexpectedly possible: the hero overcoming himself, simultaneously overcomes Nature. A miracle occurs that grants him the contrary agreeable thing the moment the contrary disagreeable thing has become agreeable to him.”

When we learn to transcend the mind's normal constructions, preferences, and prejudices, the 'miracle' happens, evil and pain and ugliness cease to be, the beast is transformed into the prince and the toothless hag is transformed into a ravishing woman.

The story of Sir Owain and the Lady of the Fountain is a graduate and even post-graduate course leading to maturity and mastery of the inner and outer worlds, the two Magdeburg hemispheres. Dr. Zimmer draws a convincing parallel between the lord consort of the Lady of the Founta--

the lord who owns the castle and the lady only so long as he is not overthrown by another, and the priest of the grove and sanctuary at Lake Remi, the theme of Sir James Frazer's monumental work, *The Golden Bough*. Sir Owain overthrows the Black Knight, and is consequently initiated into the office of Lord of the Castle and of its Countess. But Sir Owain is a member also of King Arthur's Round Table, and the claims of the latter presently draw him apart. He regains the fellowship of the Round Table, but loses the Lady of the Fountain. A long probation in suffering and self-knowledge is necessary before Sir Owain can achieve a fusion of the twin worlds and integrate in his own personality inner and outer experience, the compulsions of the Castle and the claims of the Round Table. "Such a harmoniously integrated life", says Dr. Zimmer, "is the boon which Nature bestows upon every infant, in a preliminary, undecisive way, and which the growing child then loses with the development of its self-conscious individuality. The romance of Owain teaches, through its pictorial script, how to win back that boon on the level of maturity, the bliss of the kingdom of heaven: innocence reborn and strength re-established according to the pattern of that primitive state of enlightened childhood which Christ points to as the model for the perfect."

Sir Lancelot, the flawed heroic hero of mediaeval romance, was in reality a pagan warrior in a Christian setting. Endless were the legends that grew round the fatal passion of Lancelot for Guinevere, Elaine's fatal infatuation for Lancelot, and the tensions caused by these emotional entanglements. Lancelot and Guinevere "lived in sin"—but, according to the pagan view, they were both projections of an omnipotent Life Force, and hence had no real choice in the matter. Lancelot is a puissant "animus-figure" who is "bound indissolubly, blindly, and forever, to the goddess of sheer life force, in the role of her rescuing devotee". Lancelot's intrepidity and charm and extraordinary prowess make him a dashing knight-errant and the hero of a hundred tournaments. Nevertheless, his infatuation for Guinevere renders him unfit for the Christian adventure of the Holy Grail. His son, Sir Galahad, re-embodies and redeems him, and achieves at last a splendid fusion of "the worldly sphere of desires and the higher one of the purely spiritual adventure."

The last of the romances from the Cycle of King Arthur is the story of Merlin's passive surrender to Niniane. In Tennyson's idyl, *Merlin and Vivien*, the magician is cruelly duped, while Vivien hurrahs in her triumph and abandons him to his fate. In the version given by Dr. Zimmer, however, Merlin is no fool or dupe, and Niniane is no heartless criminal. The career of Merlin seems here to end, not with a bang but with a whimper, for he

is seemingly the victim of the charms he has taught Niniane. Perhaps, after all, it is a relief to Merlin to yield his sovereignty to the charming Niniane and, as it were, change sexes with her. Dr. Zimmer's comment on Merlin's fate is both refreshing and stimulating:

"There is food for thought in Merlin's end. There are worse fates for the body and for the soul. To be driven everlastingly around the world on adventures that never end, no matter how varied they may be, is finally a monotony as narrow and confining as the magic circle under the flowering thorn...For the heart of man is committed to two worlds. On the one hand, there is the wild forest of experience, which is without as well as within, pathless, full of monsters and adventures, fairies and enchantresses, and of spellbound lovely beings who require to be rescued and who then bewitch their rescuers. And, on the other hand, there is the dense sweet-smelling whitethorn hedge; and all longing for far spaces comes home to rest under its cloud of flowers, painfully yet blissfully stilled. The serpent coils into its last sleep. And this is the eve of creation, the last night before the myriad forms and events of the visible world have burst from the sanctuary whose veil no hand has ever raised."

The title piece in Dr. Zimmer's collection, 'The King and the Corpse' is a brief résumé of King Vikramaditya's adventures with the *Vetāla* (the spectre within the corpse) as recorded in *Vetāla Panchavimsati*, widely current in India in a number of versions. The King in name has to become King in fact, in puissance, in wisdom, in serene self-knowledge. The initiation into real kingly sovereignty is the theme of the story. By footing and scaling the seemingly endless juts and crags of difficult endeavour alone can the tireless warrior-king reach the peak of achievement and fulfilment. At long last, Vikramaditya the great king, made wise by his harrowing nightly ordeal, enlightened as to his true nature by Shiva, returns to his worldly throne, human yet more than human, to complete his appointed task. The exhortation is addressed to all men of action, great or small, that they should realize their identity with the Supreme and yet continue their appointed tasks in this world. The lesson of the story may be rendered in the words the Rishi addresses to Manu in Sri Aurobindo's poem:

Work, love and know,—so shall thy spirit win
Immortal bliss.

Love men, love God. Fear not to love, O King,
 Fear not to enjoy;
 For Death's a passage, grief a fancied thing
 Fools to annoy.
 From self escape and find in love alone
 A higher joy...

Seek Him upon the earth. For thee He set
 In the huge press
 Of many worlds to build a mighty state
 For man's success,
 Who seeks his goal. Perfect thy human might,
 Perfect the race.
 For thou art He, O King. Only the night
 Is on thy soul
 By thy own will. Remove it and recover
 The serene whole
 Thou art indeed, then raise up man the lover
 To God the goal.

These tales of the "soul's conquest of evil" are concerned with human beings, although some of them may have had divine affiliations of some sort or other. Perfection is no easy goal to reach by a swift intrepid jump, it isn't just "given" on a plate,—it has to be striven for, it is a continuous Becoming, it lures us on and on, and as we approach it, forever flies ahead, so near, yet so elusive. The section on the 'Four Episodes from the Romance of the Goddess', with which Dr. Zimmer's volume concludes, gives us the salutary satisfaction that even in the realm of the gods Change is a sovereign force, and through the shocks of unpredictable circumstance alone things get moving! Transcendental Reality—Sachchidananda—is no doubt changeless, immobile, mute, and serene, but in the phenomenal world the play of Maya is of a tantalizing quality. In Dr. Zimmer's rendering of the story of the *Kālikā Purāna* we can watch, awed and enraptured, this play of the Great Mother, the magic of Maya ordaining the creation of Dawn, Kama and Rati, the marriage of Shiva and Sati, the self-determined death of Sati, the frenzy and cataclysmic rage of Shiva, the slow extinguishment of the rage and the agony, the retirement in Brahma's company to the *Sipra* shore and the long Yogic vigil awaiting obscurely the second advent of the goddess as the maid Parvati, daughter of Himalaya and Menaka, his wife. "The point of the myth of the Romance of the Goddess seems to

be", says Dr. Zimmer, "that no one is long permitted to remain what he is. This is the circumstance through which the world moves forward as a continuous creation."

Through varied lines of the descent of Consciousness and varied creepers of the ascent of Inconscience the singular *lila* of the Supreme is organized and carried on. The 'involuntary creation' and the 'involuntary marriage' are not quite so 'involuntary' after all and are rather significant items in the general process of creation:

"He desired, 'May I be many', He concentrated in Tapas, by Tapas he created the world; creating, he entered into it; entering, he became the existent and the beyond-existence, he became the expressed and the unexpressed, he became knowledge and ignorance, he became the truth and falsehood: he became the truth, even all this whatever that is."*

The myth of the Goddess is an illustration of the dynamics of Tapas and reinforces the lesson that the individual—even the gods—have to co-operate continually in new improvisations. The Sipra shore to which Shiva retires, like the Brook Kerith in Mr. George Moore's novel, is a sanctuary of ineffable peace and quietude where all wounds are healed, all fires extinguished, and where the miracle of resurrection is enacted in the fullness of time.

Man, God and Nature, all are striving—obscurely but surely—to create here in our midst a new heaven and a new earth. Change is the primal law, for, as Perseus declares in Sri Aurobindo's play:

All alters in a world that is the same.
Man most must change who is a soul of Time;
His gods too change and live in larger light.

But progress and evolution are no quick straight-line affairs, for "the ascent is slow and long is Time"; our destinations are obscured by the mists of our ignorance, and it is not for us to attempt to reach the goal in one heady canter. In this world of perpetual Becoming, Man, God and Nature all play their respective parts, seeing ahead but a little, zig-zagging a good deal, but not quite losing a sense of direction; still, over and above Man, God and Nature, including and exceeding these triune godheads of progress, there is that White Radiance of the transcendent Reality which

* *Taittiriya Upanishad*, III, 2-5. (Sri Aurobindo's Translation)

is One without a Second. To apprehend Reality as Being and know it as Becoming is the soul of wisdom, and the great Hindu myth of the Goddess—the home-of-all, the womb-of-all—holds the key to this paradox of One and Many, this potent double fact of the reality of Being and the actuality of Becoming.

K. R. SRINIVASA IYENGAR

He who chooses the Infinite has been chosen by the Infinite.

* * *

Freedom is the final law and the last consummation.

* * *

The self-abnegation of the ego in the Divine is its self-fulfilment.

* * *

An eternal Perfection is moulding us into its own image.

* * *

The Divine Guide has the entire love of the mother and the entire patience of the teacher.

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(From *The Synthesis of Yoga* — by Sri Aurobindo)

THE ANATOMY OF WAR*

The Philosophic Argument

A PHILOSOPHICAL interpretation of War would naturally take us very much below the surface of things to root causes and issues which are linked up with the total scheme of man's ethical and spiritual values. "Truth", said Diogenes, "lies at the bottom of a well." We must therefore look below the superficial layers of unrest, in which economic and political forces interact and produce their gigantic conflicts, to those permanent elements in the constitution of *homo sapiens* which make him exclusively among all living creatures a self-destroying species. It is being belatedly discovered that the present crisis in our civilization is primarily psychological. That we should look to man and not merely to the structures he creates for the true diagnosis of humanity's ills is a truth simple and obvious enough, but one which has been strangely obscured, and for the most part ignored. It is our ironical comment on human intelligence that it should have taken two most disastrous world wars to make man suspect the obvious. For centuries we have gone blind amid surface details and external forms of human relationship. The persistent attempt to realize the ideal of human unity by mechanical means, through legislation, economic and constitutional reform and external control, is an indication of this blindness concerning basic realities. The problem has been focussed and dealt with at a level at which merely its symptoms are acutely felt, while its origin remains unknown; and so at that level—the economic and political—no permanent solution is ever possible. For in the centre of all systems which man has created for security and self-development, is man himself, ignorant of his being, uncertain and chaotic in his purposes, lacking inward tranquillity. Unless this inner psychological confusion is understood and resolved, it will inevitably overtake and destroy the outer structure, whatever intelligence or moral fervour may have gone into the making of it. In this light, War itself becomes a symptom, the most barbarous and destructive of the inner spiritual malaise. One wonders what further extremities of anguish and travail the human mind is fated to pass through before it is delivered of this simple but basic truth.

War or strife is nothing but the projection on a mass scale of the conflict resting unsuspected in the heart of man. Though the complexion

* Talk broadcast on 4th August 1948.

of war has manifestly changed in its evolution from the tribal to the global war, the change has not been in essence, but only in greater complexity and destructiveness, in its increased scope and ruthlessness. While not denying the importance of the complex political, ideological and economic issues that are overwhelming us on all sides, a steady and whole-sighted vision discovers the key to this tragic chaos in the principle that a conflict among the many is an index and by-product of a deeper conflict in each one composing the many. The popular catalogue of causes—greed, lust for power, religious bigotry and other elemental desires and passions of human nature may be admitted up to a point. That economic factors aggravate potential war situations and that the mutual hostility of lower groups may wear the mask of ideological differences may also be recognized, we may even go further and concede the difference between the immoral wars of aggression and the justifiable wars of self-defence, defence of civilization against Asuric forces who in their triumph would have reversed the evolutionary process and restored the human race to its barbaric past. All this is true enough, but it does not tell us how humanity is to free itself from the curse of War and learn the ways of happiness and peace. The moral and religious approach have not been effective, for the reason that while they have rightly pierced below the outward symptoms, they have not laid their hands on the very source of the disease. Today, in face of the gigantic and unprecedented crisis in Civilization, programmes of moral re-armament backed by religious piety can go but a very little way. A new and radical effort on the plane of the spirit has become an absolute necessity.

We must therefore address ourselves to human nature. If we examine the totality of man's thought and action, we shall find that its basis is lack of integration or internal harmony. This is but natural. An integrated mind knows only happiness and has therefore no problems. The existence of a problem—and the human mind is a seething mass of problems—is a sure index of an inner incoherence of being. This means that our thinking in the different spheres of action has a dark and unconditioned origin and our thoughts therefore become ministers not of Truth but of unilluminated instincts and urges which form the animal base of the so-called rational mind. This has been recognized in their own way and insisted on by contemporary psychologists, but their researches in the main stop at the concept of the libido—their name for what I have called the animal base—and which they regard as the ultimate truth of human nature. The dominant urge of the libido is differently characterized as Sex or the Will-to-Power, and all the higher values, including the aesthetic and spiritual,

are reduced merely to expressions normal, abnormal or sublimated, of the all-powerful libido. Thus do the present psychologists turn a valid but partial truth about man into a monstrous error by equating it with self-knowledge or the self's discovery of his true nature. The possibility of man's exceeding and transmuting the libido itself and achieving integration or wholeness in the spirit is still not in the field of their limited and secular vision. And yet this further step is implicit in their very premisses. If I am aware that my thought and action are conditioned by a dark background, then in this very recognition I am possessed of a light, however faint, which comes from a source beyond all conditioning. To know and feel a limitation is in a sense to be beyond it. And this opens up a possibility of the deeper truth about human nature, viz., that its true centre of being is not in the conditioned, relative and divided consciousness, but in the Light that comes to it from beyond the libido and in which there is absolute goodness, truth and joy. Man in his essence is not a rational, or better rationalising animal, but a divine consciousness which is beyond conflict and sorrow. In touching the divine centre of one's being, and only then, the ideal of human unity becomes a fact of immediate realisation and the seed of all conflict, and so War, is destroyed in the heart.

It may be said that this integral consciousness has been discovered and achieved, time and again, by sages and devotees of God, but that has not helped humanity to avert War. Besides, the realisation being an individual affair does not hold the solution to the problem of war which is not an individual but a world problem. This point requires a careful answer.

The problem of War, as I have shown, must in the last analysis be resolved into the problem of individual integration. This does not mean that the War will end only when all individuals step out of the divided into the integral consciousness. We must remember that the pattern and trend of a civilization are always determined by the values that pervade it. These values are discovered and stamped on the civilization by those few choice individuals who inevitably go beyond the economic and political plane.

The many live by these values which they themselves do not create. These values are the real cementing forces that hold society together, and only in a secondary way are systems and organisations effective as forces of unity in the midst of dissension and strife. The most vital influence on man is the subtlest and therefore often escapes the superficial and outward vision of things. What is required therefore is an ever-increasing number of enlightened persons who have, by achieving Wholeness, stepped

out of the total process of exploitation, not only at the economic and the political, but what is far more important, at the psychological level. All exploitation is at bottom psychological, the desire as a result of inner insufficiency and conflict, to use another as a means for personal security or aggrandisement. The Soul Force in which Mahatma Gandhi believed is not a myth, but the most potent of all realities. Let there arise a sufficient number of such men who have the spirit's dynamism at their call and they will blast the world to re-create it on new foundations, so that spiritual values become the invisible presiding powers that assume the inner governance of the world.

Why then has spirit not acted on the world in the past to effect a triumph of its values over the sensate values of the unregenerate mind? The answer is that all this is a process of evolution and slow growth and that the time has only now come for an unprecedented outburst of the Godhead in man. So far, a secret guidance, restraint and reform were the keynotes of the Spirit's concern with the material world. But now it must be revolution, a direct thrust and seizure of power. The very complexion which War has taken in our times makes imperative an action that goes beyond patchwork reform. Today an unparalleled crisis has been reached in the affairs of men. The Monster of War has got out of hand and threatens, when it strikes, to write *finis* to the story of Civilization. It can no longer be held in check, as in the past, by ethical religious forces, much less by pacts, treaties and organisations. The present crisis is unique, because for the first time in his history everything has failed or forsaken man. He has worked out and exhausted all the potentialities of his conditioned mind and everywhere there is frustration and rapid collapse. Reason itself, the miscalled divine element in man, has become an instrument of pure sophistry and unconcealed hypocrisy. The limited human mind has run down and is incapable through self-effort of holding or being upheld by the influences of the spirit.

The world can now only be saved from a totally destructive War through the emergence of a group of Solitaries who owe allegiance to no organizations or ideologies, but who will bring into the world a cataract of luminous forces released from the divine centre in which they have their being. Naturally, there will be efforts at constructive peace at the political level to bring a World State or at least a confederation of the peoples for common human ends. But political action by itself cannot create the cementing force which will uphold its structure. The higher hope of humanity lies in the increasing number of Mahapurushas who will walk the earth and establish the truth of the spirit in the earth consciousness. The Mahapurusha

has little in common with the Nietzschean Superman, who is born out of contempt for mankind, rejecting love and service and confronting us with "the stern convulsed visage of the Titan". "Nietzsche", says Sri Aurobindo, "hymned the Olympian, but presented him with the aspect of the Asura." The true supermanhood consists in raising the highest aspirations of humanity to their absolute terms and in discovering and using a mighty hidden power which can only labour for the good of the world. The great Swami Vivekananda disclosed two visions at the end of the last century. In the first he described the nations of Europe as sitting on the top of a volcano who were doomed to perish, unless they radically altered the basis of their living. In the second he prophesied that India would rise out of her degradation and assume the spiritual leadership of the world in which role she would surpass and even eclipse her ancient glory. The heartening prophecy has in our days been confirmed by Sri Aurobindo. May the prophecy be speedily fulfilled, "For the good of the Many, for the salvation of the World."

J. N. CHUBB

THE FUTURE POETRY (concluded)*

THE WORD AND THE SPIRIT:

A DEVELOPMENT of the kind of which we are speaking must affect not only the frames of poetry, but initiate also a subtle change of its word and rhythmic movement. If there is no such change or if it is not sufficient for the new intention of the spirit, then there can be no living or no perfect self-expression. The old habits of speech cannot contain the new spirit and must either enlarge and deepen themselves and undergo a transformation or else be broken up and make way for another figure.

I have already suggested that the governing spirit and intention of this change, not always very clearly envisaged even by those who are most active in bringing it about, is a turn to a more intimate and directly or fully intuitive speech and rhythm. The thing in itself is so subtle that it can better be indicated than analysed. All poetry except that of the most outward kind is in its inmost inspiration and character intuitive, more a creation of vision and feeling than of the intelligence, and the change made is one of the level or the depth of the self from which the poetic intuition acts. The intellect in its use of speech is apt to regard it as an intellectual device, but the poetic view and use of speech is of a very different kind. As in the Vedic theory the Spirit was supposed to create the worlds by the Word, so does the poet. It is only at best the most outward or mechanical part of it which admits analysis, but even the part taken by the consciously critical or constructive mind is less intellectual than intuitive. The distinction that I am trying to draw here between the various powers of the always intuitive speech of poetry can perhaps better be felt than critically stated, but at the same time certain indications may serve to make it more clearly sensed in its spirit with the sympathetic aid of the critical intelligence.

Seen from the outside words appear to be mere physical sounds, perhaps nervous in origin, but developed for a finer and intricate use by the growing intelligence. But looked inwardly we shall see that what constitutes speech and gives it its life and appeal and significance is a subtle conscious force. It is this Force, this Shakti to which the old Vedic thinkers gave the name of *Vāk*, the goddess of creative Speech, and the Tantrik psychists supposed that this power acts in us through different subtle nervous centres on higher

* A summary of Sri Aurobindo's Future Poetry ("Arya," 1917-1920)

and higher levels of its force and thus the word has a gradation of its expressive powers of truth and vision; one of the degrees of power to which the poetic mind is called to elevate itself is Pashyanti, the seeing word.

This seeing speech has itself, however, different grades of its power and vision and expression of vision. The first and simplest power at its lowest is difficult to distinguish from prose statement except by its more compact and vivid force of presentation, but in a higher and much finer clarity this manner can also make us see the object or idea in a certain temperate lucidity of vision. Here are two examples:

Whate'er he did was done with so much ease
In him alone 'twas natural to please.

The waves beside him danced, but they
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee;
A poet could not but be gay
In such a jocund company.

This second power tries to go beyond this and attempts a more rich or a more powerful expression. In prose too there is a similar attempt, taking the shape of rhetoric. The poetic differs from prose rhetoric in the same way as the lower kind of poetic adequacy differs from prose adequacy. Here are two examples:

Atoms and systems into ruins hurled
And now a bubble burst and now a world.

Here is a sublimer rhetoric from Milton belonging to his more external manner,—

Hurled headlong flowing from the ethereal sky
With hideous ruin and combustion down
To bottomless perdition.

A more temperate pitch and more capable of suggestion will be found in many passages of Wordsworth,—

And oft when in my heart was heard
Thy timely mandate, I deferred
The task in smoother walks to stray.

A richer, subtler and usually a truer poetic effectivity is attained not by this rhetorical manner but by a language succeeding by apt and vivid metaphor and simile and beauty of phrase or the forceful word in making the mind see the body of the thought with a singularly living distinctness, or energy of suggestion and nearness. For instance:

Its passions will rock thee
As the storms rock the ravens on high;
Bright reason will mock thee
Like the sun from a wintry sky.

English poetry is especially opulent in this manner; but yet we feel that this is not the highest degree of which poetic speech is capable.

This comes when the style is raised, not only clearly or richly, but in a flash or outbreak of transforming light which kindles the thought or image into a disclosure of new significances of a much more inner character, a more profoundly revealing vision, emotion, spiritual response. This illuminating poetic speech comes suddenly and rarely, as in Dryden's

And Paradise was opened in his face.

As a rule the romantic poets will give us many and different illustrations of this kind of writing, suggestive, with illuminative closeness, striking across strong and effective poetical thinking, leaping up to set the tone of a poem. And supreme examples within the limits of this power which will bring out all their difference from the more common texture of poetry, may be taken from the same poets,—Shelley's

The silent moon
In her interlunar swoon.

The difference here we find to be an increasing intensity and finally a concentrated purity and fullness of the substance and language of intuitive expression. The two powers, of intellect and of intuition, seem to lean on and support each other, at a certain point are brought very close and even to the point of fusion, and then suddenly the border is crossed, the difficulty of getting out through the doors of the mind the pure untranslated language of intuitive vision is overcome. We arrive at a more uplifted range of an inspired poetic speech, which brings to us not only

pure light and beauty and depth, but a greater moved ecstasy of highest or largest thought and sight and speech and at its highest culminates in the inevitable, absolute and revealing word. The purely intuitive, inspired or revelatory utterance is the most rare and difficult for the human mind to command, and it is these kinds that we peculiarly value. The greatest poets have been those in whom these moments of a highest intensity of intuitive and inspired speech have been of a frequent occurrence and in one or two of a miraculous abundance. There is, however, this subtle farther variation that this kind of utterance, though essentially the same always, takes a different colour according to the kind of objective vision and subjective vision which is peculiar to the mind of the poet in its normal action. Compare Shakespeare's

Life's but a walking shadow.....
 it is a tale
 Told by an idiot full of sound and fury
 Signifying nothing.—

and Shelley's voicing of a kindred idea of transience,

Heaven's light forever shines, earth's shadows fly;
 Life like a dome of many-coloured glass
 Stains the white radiance of eternity,
 Until death tramples it to fragments.

It would be difficult for the present human mind to recover the same spirit as moved Shakespeare's speech; it is nearer to that of the later poets. Still the manner of the coming poetry is likely to recover and hold as its central secret something akin to the older poet, a greater straight impact. It will be the language of a higher intuitive mind swallowing up the intellectual tones into the closenesses and identities of a supra-intellectual light and Ananda.

The future poetry, assuming it to be of the kind I have suggested, must be perfectly adequate to its task which is to express the truth of things in the inmost way, if it speaks wholly in the language of the intuitive mind and vision and language. The voice of poetry comes from a region above us, a plane of our being above and beyond our personal intelligence, a supermind which sees things in their inmost and largest truth by a spiritual identity. It is the possession of the mind by the supramental touch and the communicated impulse to seize this sight and word that creates

the psychological phenomenon of poetic inspiration and it is the invasion of it by a superior power to that which it is normally able to harbour that produces the temporary excitement of brain and heart and nerve which accompanies the inrush of the influence. It is rarely however that it comes direct and unaltered, ready embodied and perfect and absolute. And the more we can light up the veil and have the direct transmission, the greater the force of inspiration and revelation and the nearer we shall get to an absolute and inevitable word straight from the supramental sight and language.

In a certain kind of continental poetry, much of present-day English poetry, among the Irish poets and in a different way the few Indians who have written in English—all are secretly moved to their very different and often contradictory tendencies by the same fundamental endeavour of the Time-spirit. The old habits of poetic speech still cling around and encrust or dilute the subtler subtlety, though at its best it emerges from the admixture of older methods and manifests the pure characteristic note of the intuitive manner.

The character of this change is a raising of what I have called the adequate and the dynamic degrees of poetic speech to the third intuitive and illuminative power or a touching and penetrating them with its peculiar lustre.

These are beginnings and beyond lies much that has to be done to effectuate the complete change; an uncertain transition has yet to pass into a great transformation. The moulds or at least the spirit and manner of poetic expression have to be recast, very much as Shakespeare and his contemporaries recast the poetic speech of the English tongue; but this time it has to be done in many languages by the minds of many nation entities. The voices we already have, the work of those who have something of the new substance but not a mastery of its native expression and those who have the new speech and rhythm but a poverty of the substance, the perfections attained even, are to be regarded only as incipient efforts and successes and stimulations to a more complete disclosure of the unfolding spirit. The speech that opens more constantly the door of the intuitive self in the caverns of light of our nature has not done all that is to be done. The speech also has to be found that shall come by the rending or removal of the golden lid between our intelligence and the effulgent supra-intelligence and effect a direct and sovereign descent and pouring of some absolute sight and word of the spirit into the moulds of human language.

CONCLUSION

The poetry of the future has to solve, if the suggestions I have made are sound, a problem new to the art of poetic speech. The attempt to speak in poetry the inmost things of the spirit or to use a psychical and spiritual seeing has indeed been made before, but for the most part it has used some kind of figure or symbol more than a direct language of inmost experience or else it has been within the limited province of a purely inward experience. It is a different and much larger creative and interpretative movement that we now see in its first stages, an expansion of the inner way of vision to outer no less than to inner things, by a closer identity in the self of man with the self of things and life and Nature and of all that meets him in the universe. The poet has to find the language of these identities, and even symbol and figure, when used, must be used in a different fashion, less as a veil, more as a real correspondence.

The first condition of the complete emergence of this new poetic inspiration must be the completion of an as yet initial spiritualised turn of our general human feeling and intelligence. At present the human mind is occupied in passing the borders of two kingdoms; there has been a sort of slipping over unexpected borders by intellectualism. There is therefore an uncertain groping in many directions—a vitalistic intuitivism that strays amid dubious lights on the border; an emotional and sensational psychic intuitivism that has often a strange beauty and brilliance, sometimes stained with morbid hues, but mostly strained to an exaggeration of vital-psychic motive; there is a purer and more delicate psychic intuition with a spiritual issue, that which has been brought by the Irish poets; Whitman's poetry has been a poetry of life, but life broadened, raised and illumined by a strong intellectual intuition of humanity. And at the subtlest elevation of all that has yet been reached stands or rather wings and floats in a high intermediate region the poetry of Tagore, not in the complete spiritual light, but amid an air shot with its seekings and glimpses, a sight and cadence found in a psychic-spiritual heaven of subtle and delicate soul experience transmuting the earth tones by the touch of its radiance. At the same time one feels, however, that none of these things are at all the whole of what we are seeking or the definite outcome and issue.

It is possible that it may be rather in eastern languages and by the genius of eastern poets that there will come the first discovery of this perfection. On the other hand the West, though it is hampered by an excessive outward, intellectual and vital pressure, if these once take the right

direction, has the advantage of a more widely ranging thought and a more questioning and active eye.

The poetry of the English language in direct relation to which I have made these suggestions has certain disadvantages for the task that has to be attempted but also certain signal advantages. It has constantly shown a free spirit of poetical adventure and a perfect readiness to depart from old moorings. It has an unsurpassed power of imaginative and intuitive expression of the life soul and to some degree in that of the inspired intelligence. It seems, therefore, a predestined instrument of the new poetic language of the intuitive spirit. The chief danger of failure arises from the external directions of the Anglo-Saxon mind. Today, however, the language is no longer the tongue only of the English people; the Irish mind with its Celtic originality and psychic delicacy of vision and purpose have entered into this poetic field; it is receiving too for a time an element or at least an embassy and message from the higher spiritual mind and imagination of India; the countries beyond the seas will bring large and new element to the increase of the spiritual potentialities of the now wide-spreading language.

The pouring of a new and greater self-vision of man and Nature and existence into the idea and the life is the condition of the completeness of the coming poetry. The intellectual idea was not yet enough, for it had to find its own greater truth in the spiritual idea and its finer cultural field in a more delicate and complex and subtle psychic sight and experience. It is this that has been prepared by recent and contemporary poetry. The expression of this profounder idea and experience is again not enough until the spiritual idea has passed into a complete spiritual realisation and not only affected individual intellect and psychic mind and imagination, but entered into the general sense and feeling of the race and taken hold upon all thought and life to reinterpret and remould them in their own image. It is this spiritual realisation that the future poetry has to help forward.

It is in effect a larger cosmic vision that is the call upon humanity, the prospect offered to it by the slowly unfolding and now more closely disclosed Self of the universe. The nations that most include and make vital these things in their life and culture are the nations of the coming dawn and the poets of whatever tongue and race who most completely see with this vision and speak with the inspiration of its utterance are those who shall be the creators of the poetry of the future.

LIGHTS ON THE FUNDAMENTALS*

(Continued from the issue of August 1948)

5. From the sole Cause, the Mighty One, many worlds are born; hence it is apposite that the Manifold Birth subsists in the One¹.

It was stated in the previous couplet that Creation is a release, *srishti*, from the Supreme Being. The release or creation of the worlds is a self-interpretation by the power and consciousness of the Lord in the process of his own unfoldment. And each object in the shape of a world or a system of worlds being a self-manifestation of the Supreme, contains in itself all that is necessary to bring out the innermost secret Bliss of existence. Irrespective of their bulk or quality, the manifested forms can have no existence apart from the One from which they are derived, like the thousand leaves of a tree which have no living separate from the trunk and branches from which they shoot forth. Hence it is stated that the Cause is one and mighty enough to hold the many in itself. The common conception that the One is opposed to the Many is an error in the mental reasoning consequent on its constitutional inability to perceive the propriety of apparent opposites that are really aspects of a larger whole. Hence the appositeness of the many in the One had to be affirmed here. It is also to be noted that when we say that the manifold manifestation takes place in the One, it must be understood not only that the One is the ground in which the manifestations appear, but also that it is not a *numerical* one that is meant but the Substantial One that is the underlying principle as well as the overruling factor of the manifested Many.

The couplet is content with the statement about the appropriateness of the Many sustained in the One. But a doubt may arise that the birth, the Many from the One may continue its existence without any necessary relation maintained between itself and the essential background from which it has sprung. The next verse removes such a possible doubt.

* तत्त्वप्रभा

¹ नानालोकाः प्रजायन्ते कारणादेकतो विभोः ।
तस्मादेकत्र नानात्वमुत्पन्नमुपपद्यते ॥५॥

6. Relation subsists between the One unborn and the many worlds that are born of the Lord.¹

The unborn One maintains its connection with its own Manifestation in the form of the worlds. This had to be stated because in some of the systems of philosophic thought it is held that God is aloof from and indifferent to the creation which has somehow come to be and the worlds, once they are born, are left to their own. We need not concern ourselves with the different reasons or considerations that motivate such arguments, for instance, the desire to absolve God from responsibility for the existence of ignorance, evil and suffering in the world. These worlds, with all their imperfections, have taken their birth from the Lord, *Isha-janmanah*, and this parental relation does not snap with the moment of their inception. It continues, but with varying stresses on its functional aspects. The relation is real and incessantly operative.

7. And were it not for the relation sustained between the One and the Many, there would be no order, no law, seen in the world-movement.²

It is not the intention here to venture a logical argument to prove the existence of God, the Lord of creation; for it was stated in the opening lines that the Ultimate Reality, the God—the beginning and end of all the worlds—cannot be proved to exist by means of cold logic and that the truth of it can be comprehended only by the higher faculties of the mind, intuitional, revelatory or any other characteristic workings of the Light overtopping the mind. Be that as it may, no keen eye could fail to perceive a certain rhythm, a kind of Order, side by side with disorder also, running on its own larger lines, a Law of grand columns in the rushing movement of the world. It would even seem clear to the discerning mind that only Law, the Order is real and the chaos we find in Nature only indicates the unavoidable or initial failures or necessary evils in the working out of the Cosmic Law and Order even as revolutions quite often prove to be concentrated steps in evolution. But it is not a mechanical law, an Order fixed to a pattern, that we meet with. It vibrates with a Life that overcomes with a tempestuous force the hardest of obstructions, it operates with the ease and certainty and precision of a Master Intelligence that is unmistakably working it out in the material aspect of this Creation. This

¹ उत्पन्नानामनेकेषां लोकानामीशजन्मनाम् ।

अनुत्पन्नस्य चैकस्य सम्बन्धो ध्रियते सतः ॥६॥

² अथ चैकत्व-नानात्वसम्बन्धो ध्रियते न चेत् ।

क्रमो वा नियतिर्न स्यात्लोकयात्रासु लक्षितः ॥७॥

fact of a directing intelligence has to be admitted here, without which a working faith in the ultimate manifestation of the Most Blissful in us would be impossible. For, the presentation of this system to the enquiring mind is after all a help, ancillary to the aims of Yoga which is our utmost concern, as stated in the beginning.

8. If the law were groundless, it would be devoid of meaning; for even the dunce does not engage in activity without purpose.¹

Till now we spoke of the Supreme Lord as the Cause of all the worlds, as their ground and base and as their essential being also. Here for the first time it is stated in unequivocal terms what was hinted earlier that there is a purpose in creation. That purpose is the meaning for the realisation of which all laws and movements, ways and means are determined. Here again the idea is this that creation or any part or whole of it has not come out to be against the will and without the knowledge of the Supreme, but it has come to be with the full knowledge and with a purpose and as an effect of the workings of the Divine Will. It is a common saying of the Mimamsakas, recalled here, that even a dunce does not undertake a task without purpose. That is to say, there is the God's Will and there is a divine purpose in the Creation; for otherwise, there would be no point in His Will initiating this gigantic Movement and set it going out of His Being in Eternity.

9. Hence the universal movement has meaning. The world has Intelligence for its guide, is not led by the blind.²

Once we recognise that the world-creation is a willed movement of the Divine, it acquires a deep significance. The entire world-movement, all Nature, revolves round the central purpose laid down by the Nature's Lord. Not merely as a whole, but in every detail there is a law that is being observed, there is an end that is being served. For, if what propels the world-activity is the Divine Will, what guides it is the Divine Intelligence. It is the shining light of the seeing Wisdom that looks ahead, lights up the way and leads the course of the creation along the highway of its blaze. The Path may appear dark, uneasy, zigzag, meaningless to the human mind but in fact, looked at from the heights of the supernal Intelligence, it is the most effective course. The movement may appear

¹ नियतिर्यदि निर्मूला निरर्था सा भवेद्, यतः ।
प्रयोजनमनुद्दिश्य न मन्दोऽपि प्रवर्तते ॥८॥

² तस्मात्सर्वस्य लोकस्य गतिरर्थवती यतः । -
प्रज्ञानेत् जगत्प्राहुरिदं नान्धेननी यते ॥९॥

unsteady, wasteful and even guideless or with a blind leader for guide. But it forms no part of the Divine Scheme to entrust a making out of His own Being to a blind force or agent for guardianship. The guiding Intelligence is as fully present in the minutest detail as in the huge magnitude of its labour and may so overwhelm our little minds and seem to them as if it were void of vision and aim.

(to be continued)

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

SRI AUROBINDO'S ESOTERIC INTERPRETATION OF THE VEDAS*

ONCE I met an accomplished Hathayogin who told me point blank that ancient Sanskrit literature could not be correctly understood by those who eat rice and curry, do not practise Hathayoga and are full of external and internal impurities. Their understanding is an understanding of a sort, a low type of understanding equal almost to a baby's understanding of the Vedanta. The words of the Hathayogin made a deep impression on my mind and almost for the rest of my life my pride of understanding melted.

I recount this episode here in order to impress the fact that purity of the mind and body is essential for understanding even ordinary literature. What tremendous amount of purity, both mental and physical, must be necessary when handling the most ancient literature of literatures like the Vedas and the Upanishads embodying expressions of supernormal seers, saints and mystics after life-long meditation and spiritual discipline! Therefore I believe that none but a Yogi should be entitled to handle the Vedas, none but a Yogi should be allowed to interpret so profound, so voluminous and so sacred a literature.

My personal opinion is that modern interpretations of the Vedas, both linguistic and cultural, are superficial to the extreme, and constitute an insult to the noble literature of the Vedas. That being my personal view, I do not see the least objection to a new esoteric interpretation by Sri

* Based on Sri T. V. Kapali Sastry's *Lights on the Veda* and the *Rigbhashya-bhūmika* in Sanskrit.

Aurobindo who, after having practised the most rigorous austerities of Yoga, has reached the very zenith of mental and physical purity. The subtle and great truths of Nature can be perceived by a brain rendered subtle and pure by purificatory discipline. Gross minds made grosser by impure foods and gross actions and by constant contact with gross matter, cannot be the receiving station of divine truths of an esoteric character. Sri Aurobindo is one such purified mind to receive and transmit in his own inimitable style the great Hymn of Life secretly hidden in the Vedas, the eternal fountain of wisdom and knowledge.

None can deny that the Vedas have an esoteric meaning which can be comprehended through the six Angas or subsidiary treatises among which the Vedanga Jyotisa is the chief. The business of the Itihasa and Purana is merely to elaborate the hidden meaning of the Vedas. The mighty Sun God is in the centre of the Vedas with the Naksattradevatatas like Agni, Prajapati, Soma, Rudra, and others as His manifold unfoldments. There were and there still are only two cultures in Sanskrit. The first is Vedic and the second is Tantric. The Tantric culture is well-known to be esoteric. Then why not the Vedic? It is obvious that the later Tantra System was esoteric simply because the earlier Vedas were esoteric in essence. In India no system can hope to survive unless it derives authority from the Vedas, the eternal source of knowledge.

Sri Aurobindo is again visualising the meaning of the Vedic verses according as the Great Lord wants him to see in this present age of confusion, cupidity and parasitism. Even Sri Aurobindo may not be able to comprehend the whole mystery in its entirety. In the absence of a greater Yogi let the world accept his interpretation of the Vedas as the only esoteric interpretation available to mankind.

DR. BENOYTOSH BHATTACHARYA

SRI AUROBINDO, TEACHER AND LEADER*

IT is with great joy that I congratulate the organizers of the *Kalki* and particularly Mr. A. J. Doddmeti and his friends for the correct lead they are taking at this critical time of our national history. It is true that the chief aim of a journal is dissemination of correct news and it is its first duty. But it is now well recognised that another and not less important aim of journalism is to give a lead to the nation in the formation of public opinion on matters of provincial, national and international importance. Your turning to Sri Aurobindo for inspiration in this important task is a fact of great significance for various reasons.

Firstly, a change in ideology and in methods pursued by our people and our leaders up to now has become imperative. The ideal of freedom having been already realised, a new creative and, if you like, constructive outlook has become necessary. Methods of agitation, criticism, opposition and resistance directed against foreign domination have lost their appropriateness. It is a pity that many of our leaders even have not outlived their old habits of thinking and working. It is unfortunately a fact that many of our countrymen have not yet learnt to think and feel as free men. The ideologies that hold the field—or try to hold it—have no contact with the deeper soul of the nation. They only touch at the most the economic and outward life of the people. It is also true that there are some among our intelligentsia who hope to succeed in importing ideologies from abroad and plant them on the Indian soil. While granting that no nation can live in complete isolation today, we have yet to prove that the collective soul of a nation has no contribution of its own to make to human culture. And we have also to find out whether any “ism” is going to be really a cure for all evils from which humanity is suffering. Thus, after the attainment of freedom, we seem to be lacking clarity of vision and creative power.

At such a time it is heartening to see Karnatak (Kannada) turning to the right source of inspiration and guidance. It is, in fact, a further evidence of the heart and mind of India slowly turning to Sri Aurobindo. The false notion that Sri Aurobindo has taken refuge in an irrevocable other-worldliness, silence and seclusion is gradually giving way before indubitable facts. Let me quote here from his authentic biography recently published: “This retirement from *political* activity (not from life) was complete.

* A talk given at the opening ceremony of *Kalki*, a Canarese Weekly, at Gadag.

But this did not mean, as most people supposed, that he had retired into some height of spiritual experience devoid of any further interest in the world or in the fate of India. It *could not* mean that, for the very principle of his Yoga was not only to realise the Divine and attain to a complete spiritual consciousness, but also to take all life and all world activity into the scope of this spiritual consciousness and action, to base life on the spirit and give it a spiritual meaning."

For sometime past, there are happy signs of India's mind turning to Sri Aurobindo. The first stir was made in the intellectual world by his great masterpiece, *The Life Divine*, highly praised by many great intellectuals of today. It was first our intellectuals who began to take interest in him when they found him bringing a crown of glory to India in the world of thought. Another important occasion when he came prominently before the mind of our people was the 15th of August 1947, a day of double deliverance for us—deliverance from foreign political domination, deliverance from the reign of Ignorance, if we accept his message and follow him. It is not a mere coincidence that the day of India's deliverance should come on the auspicious birthday of one who was a high priest of Indian Nationalism, and who contributed not a little to the advent of freedom by his sacrifices, sincerity, intellectual eminence and fearless leadership. The words that he uttered to the Nation forty years back have a very striking appropriateness even today. I will content myself with only one of the many inspiring sentences which he uttered while speaking to the students of the newly founded National College at Calcutta in 1908, "Work that she (Mother India) may prosper, suffer that she may rejoice."

The ideal which our nation has pursued through the course of her long history is a spiritual ideal. And we find in the world today that no outer endeavours, no constitution or institution, no mere economic programmes or educational efforts can save humanity. Prof. S. K. Maitra aptly remarked in his presidential address at the recent Philosophical Conference, Bombay, "We must produce better men if we are to improve human relations. To say that what we require today is a better international organisation leading to a better understanding among nations is really begging the whole question. How is it possible to have a better international organisation, if the men who are entrusted with the work, have no better minds to bring to their task than what they possess today? A great international organisation and little minds go ill together."

Therefore, so long as the individual does not change, mankind cannot be saved. This means that the problem is subjective, psychological, spiritual. Man is a spiritual entity—both in his individual and collective

aspects. Both as an individual and as a collectivity, man has to learn to give up being occupied merely with his vital desires, interests, ambitions and satisfaction of his ego. Even collective or national selfishness and egoism is to be eschewed. If man really aspires to do this, he will have to give up his dependence on mental and even ethical idealism. He will have to fix his faith on the Self, on the Divine in him.

I will be told that this is asking man to be spiritual and even expecting society, the nation also to be spiritual. How can spirituality and life—individual or collective—go together? Let me quote the words of our greatest seer of today, to show how important is the relation of life and spirituality.

“And a great sign of the failure of the society is when the individual is obliged to flee from the society in order to find room for his spiritual growth; when, finding human life given over to the unregenerated mind, life and body or the place of spiritual freedom occupied by the bonds of form and Church and Shastra, he is obliged to break away from all these to seek for growth into the spirit in the monastery, on the mountain-top, in the cavern, the desert and the forest. When there is that division between life and the spirit, sentence of condemnation is passed upon human life.... There may be a glorious crop of saints and ascetics in that forcing soil, but the race, the society, the nation move towards littleness, weakness and stagnation.” *

In his open letter “To my countrymen”—he said—“All we need is a field and an opportunity. That field and opportunity can only be provided by a national Government, a free society and a great Indian culture.”

Today we have secured political freedom, but we have yet to build up “a free society and a great Indian culture”. That can best be done by accepting the spiritual basis of individual and collective living. In that task of reconstruction the work done by Sri Aurobindo during these long years is of supreme value. To all the fields of life in all the branches of human culture he has made outstanding contributions. The peculiar merit of his contribution is its characteristic Indian note,—its living continuity of spiritual experience from the Vedas down to the present day. And yet he is not a mere traditionalist. He brings a great, integral and synthetic outlook, cosmic in its sweep to bear upon all the subjects. There is no field of life which he has not touched and there is nothing that he has not enriched and ennobled by his masterly touch. To political progress, social reconstruction, to poetry, to arts, to literature, he has made lasting contri-

* From *Arya*, Vol. IV, The Psychology of Social Development

butions. Over and above these things, during the long period of his Sadhana he has plumbed the depths and risen to the heights of the Spirit.

It is therefore in the fitness of things Indian that we should seek to mould our life with the help of and under the guidance of a great Rishi—a great Yogi. When a spiritual light like that of Sri Aurobindo returns to life (and is not turned away from it)—with its spiritual opulence, it is as the result of a spontaneous will to do good to the world. But that will emanates from spiritual knowledge and is far superior to all mere mental or intellectual stirrings, even to those which take the appearance of altruism. Such great seers are always free from personal ambition and they have a more correct appreciation of the nation's need—and the need of humanity based on knowledge by identity.

He said in one of the political speeches (at Jhalakati Conference in 1908) that “it is because God has chosen to manifest Himself and has entered into the hearts of his people that we are rising again as a Nation.”

The power that he spoke of as having entered into the hearts of his people, the Divine that he declared in the Uttarpara Speech, the power that guided him to keep away from politics temporarily—that Power is there and is fortunately available in proportion as we turn our hearts and minds to it; that power will reveal itself more and more, will act as an influence upon all our activities and, if we are willing, can guide us in life. Let us therefore open ourselves more and more to this delivering and transforming light which is within us; it has come to descend into us, into life, so that some as yet unrealised perfection of humanity might become possible. Let us be worthy of it and serve it to the best of our powers.

I heartily congratulate Kannada for turning to Sri Aurobindo for light and I am glad to avail myself of the occasion to dispel the false notion that Sri Aurobindo and his Yoga are not connected with life. Now that you have already got the contact, I would urge upon you to intensify it. If all the activities can rightly be connected to the source of Light, you will find that in the midst of uncertain, precarious and halting guidance of mere mind, you have the purest and the surest source—a source unfailing.

A. B. PURANI

SOME PROBLEMS OF POETRY

(Three Letters)

To D

ARTISTIC intensity I have always stressed. It provides the key to a lot of problems connected with poetry. The problem of sincerity which you mention is one of them.

A poem is admittedly an art-medium and if an art-medium is chosen for what one has to say, artistic intensity is of paramount value. Once you grant this, it becomes pointless to speak, as you have done, of "simply an artistic value" in a spiritual poem. Perhaps you mean by "artistic value" decorativeness laid on from without or mere technical skill. But these things are not art. The former is in fact a fault which art must avoid. The latter is indeed necessary, yet it is not all that art comprises. A particular kind of force from within, a certain type of intensity, has to become technical skill if we are to have artistic value. Thus understanding artistic value we may state that in a spiritual poem, as in any other kind of poem, sincerity is worthless without it. If spiritual sincerity in a poem is to depend for its worth on anything else, what purpose can be served by selecting a form of art for its expression? Why not just blurt out what you feel? Why cast it into image and symbol, why attend to qualities of rhythm, why resort to metre and rhyme?

I am not asking you to be an art-for-art's-saker in the sense that so long as you create art it does not matter whether the art is spiritual or no. You are quite right, as a sadhak, to believe that you must produce spiritual stuff or nothing. But don't forget you are producing it in an art-medium. If you do, the quality of your work will suffer. I don't think you are oblivious of the paramount importance of artistic intensity. Otherwise, why should you pick and choose, as you do, from among your poems? All you write is spiritually sincere: yet you reject some poems and keep others. Your sifting is done because, no matter how sincere you may spiritually be, your sincerity will not be the sort necessary in poetry if you do not achieve artistic intensity.

Here you are likely to raise the point: "Is it not possible for a poem to come artistically intense, to be inspired in form, without being sincere?" Well, how is a reader of poetry to judge what poem is sincere and what

insincere? He is not supposed to know how a poet has lived: he has only the poem to go by. You surely do not expect all your readers to be aware that you are a resident of Sri Aurobindo's Ashram and are faithfully following in your Guru's footsteps? Lacking that awareness, will they be doomed ever to doubt your sincerity? I put it to you that they will never fail to feel a poem to be sincere if there is artistic intensity in it, the inspiration of form. In the absense of this intensity they may feel that you are sincere as a man, but they will never feel that you are sincere as a poet. Conversely, they will feel that where a poet has artistic intensity he is *ipso facto* sincere.

Is this startling? It wouldn't be if certain misconceptions were removed. The first truth to bear in mind is that a poet is not bound to have an actual experience of whatever he says. When, for instance, you write:

O-deep starry secrecy
Twinkling in my heart!—

are you stating a fact of your experience as a man? You may be, but you could just as well have written the lines without doing so. Certainly, you did have some emotion of what you said; but I doubt whether your psychic being actually experienced a mysterious vastitude, realised a divine cosmicity full of myriad glimmerings and thrillings of intuition. What did happen, most probably, is that such an Immense existing within the hitherto unexplored profundities of your inner and higher self found you sympathetic to its presence, stirred your imagination and used you as a verbal medium. Of course, if one were possessed of the full experience one would be more frequently a verbal medium of its rare richness, but outbursts of regions of consciousness unrealised by the poet do occur pretty often in poetry.

The second truth to remember is that a man can have many sides to his nature and, while one side may have a turning towards God, another may have a penchant for the Devil: the work he does through the former is not insincere just because the latter has play in him too. Unless he rejects the devilish side, he will not create very often through the Godward side and his creative possibilities there will remain unfulfilled on the whole. Yet, what does come forth in poetry through the opening he somewhere has to the Divine can be as sincere as the work of a consistent spiritual seeker, provided the artistic expression is perfect.

The third truth to keep in view is that a poet has the power of entering into some sort of communion with anything and everything—even those

things which are far removed from his trend of life and run counter to his general disposition or character. A dramatist may write a play to illustrate his own vision of the truth of the universe, but one of his *dramatis personae* can be somebody who holds a diametrically opposite vision and this vision can be expressed also with poetic perfection in the course of the play. You don't suppose Shakespeare was a murderer or even in sympathy with murdering: still, the speech he puts into the mouth of Lady Macbeth invoking the powers of evil to aid her in killing Duncan is one of the peaks of the Shakespearean Parnassus. And it has not one false note, it is absolutely sincere, a potential murderess seems actually speaking.

I have written at some length merely to help you look at poetry in the right way. My remarks are not meant to dissuade you one whit from cutting yourself off, for the sake of your personal sadhana, from certain poets and feeding more and more on certain others. But what I have written can assist you to distinguish grades of artistic excellence in the poets you like and not accept everything as equally good. Also, I hope some parts of this letter will help you in intensifying your own inspiration and guiding yourself along the correct path in your self-criticism.

I cannot say that the path indicated by your friend in his letter is really desirable. If we went by the criterion of the same recognisable Force which is behind all your poems, there would be no need to weed out anything: all your poems bear the mark of an Aurobindonian sadhak and, judged in that light, they must without exception be preserved and published. But to lump everything together would be to serve ill even the Force your friend speaks of: that Force is best served in poetry by what is poetically intensest.

To R

We must not underrate in the poetic phenomenon the importance of form. When you respond to poetry, words and rhythms seem to remain for you a little in the background. I do not deny that to write with striking phrases and euphony and effective metre without any inner word-life and rhythm-movement getting expressed is to construct verse rather than to create poetry. But, conceived as inwardly animated and determined, form cannot occupy "a secondary place" and for the obvious reason that without it there can be no poetry at all. The *bhava*, the living sense, which you speak of as being the primary value to care for cannot function poetically in its absence. To miss form in the connotation I have given it is to miss poetry. The *bhava* has to be there, or else we shall have gibberish; but side

by side with it we must have form to produce poetry or any artistic work. If you are only after *bhava*, you are going to art not for its artistic qualities but only for its idea, its sight, its emotion, and if you do not attend to those qualities you will get these things in just a general way and not in their individual character and force. The general idea, sight and emotion in Browning's

God's in His heaven,
All's right with the world

is almost the same as in Dilip Kumar Roy's

For 'tis His will that overarches all,
His sentinel love broods o'er the universe.

And yet what a gulf of difference between the individual character and force of the one and that of the other! The vision is merely skimmed in Browning: it is caught with its depths wide open in Dilip Kumar Roy. Both thought and feeling in Roy are luminously and rapturously mystical: they have in Browning no turn or tremour beyond a lightly lyricised religious outlook's. The profound glow and rapture in Roy can get realised by us only if we respond in full to the form of his expression, if we let his words and rhythms play upon us. Change the words, alter the rhythms and though the general *bhava* may stay the same, the beauty has vanished and with the beauty all individual character and force.

Maybe you will argue that once you comprehend the idea and grasp the image and stir to the emotion, it is not necessary to let the values of words and of their order and of sounds and of stresses hold the consciousness: the feel of the language, of its movement and of its music may seem to you secondary if not negligible. But in that case any words so arranged as not to be without concrete import and correct grammar would do just as well for conveying Roy's substance, and prose would be as effective as poetry. Surely you cannot imply this. And if you do not, then form is of extreme use. And in form the elements which you regard as very minor—long and short syllables, assonances and consonances, basic beats and modulations—count a lot. You may not pause to notice them and the poet may not have paused every time to manipulate them, but they are there: the inspiration working through the poet has intuitively attended to them and we must attend too, though not with a schoolmaster's dry-as-dust mind. We need not start analysing them, but we do need to give

them their proper realisation: if we mispronounce and misaccent, we shall mar the music and prevent the subtle suggestions borne on the music from filling out those of the words taken as intellectual pointers. If you go to art and do not respect form as much as what you call *bhava*, you fail to draw from art the specific values and powers it has to offer.

By the way, your observation that no great poet thinks of stresses and feet and long and short syllables while composing his poem is erroneous. Inspiration coming in a perfect rush leaves no need for the poet to play consciously the artist; but inspiration coming slowly and after considerable effort on the poet's part calls for a fair amount of conscious art-activity. Many poets correct even while they create instead of leaving correction to be done afterwards. And you are mistaken in your idea that, if they created without any correction then or afterwards, the poem would always be more touched with natural freshness and radiance. You believe Walt Whitman never revised or modified his first draft and thereby achieved a rare sincerity and simplicity which to what you term "sophisticated ears" sounds somewhat crude. That is not so. Whitman worked over his first draft as assiduously as any other poet: of course, on several occasions he had no need to work over it, but he never thought such working to be loss of sincerity and simplicity. His free verse is not another name for poetry just flowing through—without the "sophistications" of chiselling and polishing as well as of rhyme and metre. There is plenty of deliberate art and cunning rhythm-scheme and deft disposition of subtle harmonic units in his free verse.

The first draft of anything has nothing to recommend it in being first: it may be inspired or no, it may be sincere and simple or it may be "sophisticated": everything hangs on whether genuine inspiration has found a channel or a false facility has got an outlet. A corrected version is not bound to be "sophisticated"; it may be the very soul of simplicity and sincerity. Keats originally began his *Endymion* with the line:

A thing of beauty is a constant joy.

Only later, when a friend found it lacking something, he re-wrote:

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

The first draft was tame, the second electric. Those famous lines of his—

...Magic casements opening on the foam
Of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn—

had in the first draft "windows" for "casements" and "keelless" for "perilous". The whole spirit of the thing was lost: the magic atmosphere and the fairy feeling entered only when Keats started being what you term "sophisticated".

I must here mention that by your coupling of sincerity with simplicity and opposing them to sophistication you appear to suggest that to be sincere and not sophisticated one must be simple. I don't see sincerity in terms of simplicity alone. To be complex is not necessarily to be sophisticated. Sophistication is truly the product of an artificial braininess or a deliberate high-brow ingenuity. The "metaphysicals" of the seventeenth century are often sophisticated in the former sense: the "modernists" of the twentieth in the latter. But there are effects in both that are brainy or ingenious in an inspired way: some of Donne's conceits, for instance, are not superimposed on the idea and emotion but organic to them and Eliot has at times an intricate cross-light imagery that is really penetrating. Here they are apparently sophisticated while being truly sincere. Where, however, there is in a poet complexity without any braininess or ingenuity the charge of sophistication has not even an apparent bearing. Poetry may be simple or it may be complex—according to the personality of the poet and the theme in hand.

Complexity can result from a packing together of many glimpses or a drawing out of one glimpse into many details; it can result also from a colourful and opulent style instead of an austere one or a multi-winged structure of sentence and syntax rather than one that is straight-lined and direct-designed. No jot of sincerity is sacrificed by thus being complex: we may with equal force declare that Nature is natural only when she sends forth a straight stream and not a winding river, raises a mountain with easy contours and a single peak and not a steep-faced mass of several summits, unfolds a majestic oak or a grand baobab spreading uniformly upward and not a sublime banyan hanging from its height pillar on strange pillar downward to the earth. So long as some elemental energy, some urge from within, drives a poet, he rings sincere: inspiration perfectly expressing itself is the sign of sincerity and there is no reason why inspiration should be simple and not complex.

There is also the fact that occasionally the vision transcribed from an abnormal plane of consciousness seems complex to our normal mind, whereas in reality it may be quite simple for a perception in tune with that plane's spontaneities, as in a similar fashion what is clear to the mystical eye is blurred and hazy to the gaze unaccustomed to hidden yogic lights. We need not doubt the sincerity of poems expressive of such seeing. Again,

a poet may be simple in one respect and complex in another. Homer is said to be the best example of simplicity. His sentences have on the whole a simpler construction than Milton's or Keats's. Still, Homer has an extraordinary variety of inflexions and a recurrent play of polysyllables beside which the cast of Miltonic or Keatsian words is simple. He is simpler in his basic ideas than either of these English singers and yet if we mark the manner in which he lengthens out and details off his similes we must deem him more complex than they. Sincerity can go hand in hand with a lot of different things.

I am sure you did not intend to question this, but as your statement was leaning slightly to one side I have made bold to point out the impression it creates. My ideal is to be as wide-notioned and many-viewed as can be consistent with an unsleeping watch to distinguish the genuine gleam from the spurious glitter. I insist unrelentingly on authentic inspiration in poetry—the ring and radiance of the gold of beauty. Once sure of that gold, I let no bias rule me about the plain or the luxuriant, the forthright or the subtle, the clear-cut or the intricate.

To K

All poetry must be patiently and intimately lived with if we are to extract from it its full delight: spiritual or mystical poetry still more, and most the type of inspiration a few Aurobindonian poets aim at. "Most"—not simply because the meaning is likely to be difficult to grasp at first or because the life-stuff of spiritual or mystical inspiration is a reality which cannot be seized except by a sort of aesthetic Yoga. There is yet one more reason: the poetic aim now is the Divine in the original and not in a translation! This rather puzzling statement is best made clear by answering the query: what kind of poetry is the most spiritual or mystical?

To be most spiritual, poetry must draw much more than its thought-substance from a lofty source. The thought-substance of all sterling religious literature has its origin in the altitudes of the Spirit, but one usually deals in abstractions or in some emotional reconstruction of spiritual idea. The thought, of course, has to grasp the spiritual truth—and there must be an emotional counterpart to the process—but an effort must also be made to let that truth speak itself instead of our finding speech for it on the planes of consciousness on which we habitually live. The speech of these planes will not render the poetry deficient as poetry nor prove the poet's mysticism to be sham. Yet, what may be genuine as mysticism and wonderful as poetry is not necessarily supreme as the Spirit's own intrinsic

expression, not necessarily vibrant with the actual life-throb of the Spirit's own heaven and home where it stands everywhere revealed in every aspect. The Spirit clothing itself superbly in the mind's garments—there you have the wonder and wealth of the main bulk of mystical poetry in English. A few other movements are mixed with this, but this is the predominant one, and with whoever wishes to write first-rate poetic literature of mysticism *copiously*, it cannot as a rule help being predominant, since mind-stuff is for us the easiest to draw upon. But what a few of the Aurobindonians aspire to do is to write things in which the mind's garments are set aside and the Spirit's body grows visible and vibrant.

Nor is that body most desired by them as it appears on certain inner planes. An exquisite or dynamic Occultism catches the Spirit naked; so too does a radiantly piercing and sweet Psychism—but neither the habitat of God's magician nor that of God's saint holds the divine body in its direct amplitude and puissance. These poets do not rest content with the "deep within": they strive to press on to the "high above", the planes from which has descended the cosmic formula, inward or outward. And there it is the rhythm, more even than the cast of vision and the word-mould, that is the secret of the shining out of the pure Spirit. The rhythm of the "high above" is the most difficult capture. Not in all its forms, though; for there are gradations and only at the very top the utter rhythm of God's self is immediate and absolute. Then we have the *mantra*, the word plucked from the heart of the ultimate Unknown. Then "translation" is left leagues behind: we have not only a direct poetic intimacy with God in the "original" but a sheer poetic identity with Him: we not only are beyond the mind's intervening medium, we have passed from the lesser intensities of God's presence to His keenest and profoundest and vastest Self and Supernature. The *mantra* arrives in utter authenticity on the pinions of a rhythm that seems to make each line a brief aureoled manifestation, so to speak, of its passage from infinite to infinite. A consciousness, sovereign and boundless, is at play in it, and the play is most vividly communicated through an immense unfathomable vibration, as in Arjava's lines:

This patter of Time's marring steps across the solitude
of Truth's abidingness, Self-blissful and alone—

or in Dilip Kumar Roy's:

Dark waifs aspire to Thy white haven of sleep,
With voice of clay sing to the immortal stars—

or in the second of Nirodbaran's couplets:

All joy of life is now a shining part
Of the ecstasy of the Eternal Heart
Where time is a voyage with wide unfurled wings,
The flame-sails of unknown awakenings.

Sometimes the word-mould and the cast of vision are nearly of the top and still are prevented from being entirely so by a subtle lack in the sound-values. This calls for an extremely sensitive perception on the poet's as well as the reader's part to be recognised. How crucially determining a factor rhythm is can be observed if we take such a line as:

A cry to clasp in all the one God-hush.

The quality and movement here emanate from the broad clear daylight of the Spirit prevailing in the *Sahasrara Chakra*, "the thousand-petalled lotus" of consciousness immediately above the head. But we at once leap through two still higher stages and reach the threshold of the amplest intensity by merely shifting a pair of words from the middle of the line to its end:

A cry to clasp the one God-hush in all.

The rhythmic movement goes somehow sweeping into the Unknown, just drawing the sense out to a massive measureless suggestion. Such a minor alteration—a change in the place of two words, that does not perceptibly modify the meaning—and so great a difference in the spiritual quality of the line! The purely poetic power was not less before; what is added now, however light it may be, is the mantric touch.

The way the mantric touch gets in leads me to consider another question: Does intense spiritual inspiration sustained from poem to poem prove an intense spiritual life throbbing in the poet from day to day?

Indeed, to get the mantric touch often, one must be initiated into Yoga. Even to write, with some degree of command, in the language of the regions above the human mind yet below the level of the *mantra*, one must spend years in contact with the divine Truth. In the past, except for very short accidental spells, poets outside the Rig Veda, the Upanishads and the Gita never caught inspiration from these realms of light. To succeed in making these realms one's habitual fount would be to create a new poetic

literature, to usher a novel era in inspired utterance. It is part of the mission of Sri Aurobindo to give poetry this large and luminous innovation. In his recent work he has performed feats of spiritual creativity that are a breath-bereaving grandeur. A moiety of his opulence those who have stayed close to him have been able to receive. They can never thank their stars enough for the privilege to reside in his Ashram and learn by his gift of inspiration and critical insight the art of opening doors to the in-world and the over-world.

Yes, they have learnt to open mystical doors, but you must not conclude that the portals keep open all the while or that they can pass through them at will into the innermost shrine and the loftiest holy of holies. They may take a few steps forward now and again; what they more often do is to stand at the divine doors and practise a concentrated looking at the mysteries within, an intent hearing of the footfalls of the Gods. If they had the courage and consistency to walk right in and remain there among superhuman presences, they would bring to birth a more shining song, a poetry more frequently alive with the pulse of the Eternal. But, even as it is, a contact deep down inside them with the Divine persists and, though it may not kindle up a transformation of their whole self, it is at times a laying of golden fingers on the heart-strings of the poet in them.

To write with spiritual intensity is not always to be a great Yogi. If the lines that are mantric were pointers to the poet's realisation, he would out-halo Ramakrishna and dwarf Vivekananda's sagehood. Do you know that these lines derive from the dizziest pinnacles of the over-world? They flow, if not from the top of Shiva's shadowless head, then at least from under his radiant feet—and those immortal feet are all the summit of samadhi and the *ne plus ultra* of Nirvana! Surely, even though some of the poetic triumphs issue from there, the poets do not dwell in their kingdom. Nor can anyone claim to have jumped from the thousand-petalled lotus to the ineffable flower wherein the ultimate deity stands—by just transferring a pair of words to the end of a line from its middle! The jump is an act of art, not of life.

No doubt, there is an experience of vague spiritual exhilaration in every act of art that aspires to the Divine: the force of the Eternal is intuited and a grace of soul added to the consciousness; yet the phenomenon is not tantamount to realisation. The poetry has aided the Yoga but it does not measure it accurately, for it is more a shadow of things to come than a shape of what the poet is. The Spirit has sent down powerful or delicate messages to his artist-being and he has transmitted them, himself deeply thrilling in the process and moving readers like you. He has transmitted

them with a new and unusual fidelity because he has been taught by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother to watch and wait concentratedly for the Everlasting Voices. Some day he will rise from his lowlands to the kingly peaks with his whole self and live in the consciousness of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Then his poetry will not shame its imperfect composer but project in art the artist's very life and be more than a short and occasional and interrupted rapture; it will be all the time a moulded magnificence—a conflagration under divine control, a trained tornado out of the vast, a deluge of ecstasy directed by the Heavenly Hand.

K. D. SETHNA

REVIEWS

(I)

Sociology. *By Dr. Kewal Motwani.* Published by the New Book Company, Bombay.

This is a comparative outline of Sociology, written by a scholar who undoubtedly knows his subject. Every page of the book testifies to the depth of Dr. Motwani's knowledge and to the labour he has put in for the sake of the reader. In India, it is a pioneer effort and, we feel sure, will achieve the author's object of awakening interest in the subject. The only drawback that the book suffers from is that facts and theories and arguments tumble over one another in such profusion therein that the ordinary reader is likely to find considerable difficulty in clearing a path for himself. This presentation of a difficult subject by the learned author is something like the handgrip of a strong man, who unwittingly conceals his cordiality behind the pressure of his iron fingers. But let that pass. Shaking hands with a champion is always a privilege.

Now, coming to our subject, what does sociology mean? My dictionary says, it is the science of the development, nature and laws of society. What is society? It is the gregarious mode of life, the life of an individual as the member of a group. Man is a social animal by nature and habit. He has always been so.

His group-life has evolved slowly from one stage to another during his long career on this planet. It has changed its nature and its laws as it has

developed through the ages, and the development itself has been the result of give and take between individual and individual, between individual and group, between group and group. The largest group-unit is today what we call a Nation and the life of this unit is regulated by the laws enacted by the State formed by itself. How does society stand with regard to this 'Leviathan'? Is there any State that will allow an individual subject to obey a social law that clashes with the laws enacted by itself? We doubt it. Of course, all states are not omnivorous like Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Russia; there are some that allow a certain amount of volition to the individuals and the sub-groups forming the nation, but the tendency today is for all power and initiation to pass into the hands of the central authority. Sri Aurobindo noted this tendency over two decades ago and matters have certainly not improved since then. One can easily imagine a modern civilised State that exercises complete authority in all matters relating to education, sanitation, communications, manufactures, trade and commerce—leaving nothing to local and subordinate bodies except carrying out orders or, at best, advising and suggesting lines of improvement. When efficiency is the fetish one worships, one does not like delegation of one's authority. Of late years, America has been developing fast into an imperial power with territorial and commercial interests all over the globe. She is not likely to get back what altruistic outlook she seemed to have had at one time. Many American citizens today are exceedingly keen on keeping up their land and water and air forces on, more or less, an efficient war footing. England also has the same tendency. Rightly did the Master ask years ago,—“Will labour in power have the same outlook as labour in the opposition?” In the near future, is there not a chance that most States would be so largely Germanised or Russianised and that all phases of social life would pass under the strict control of an autocratic central authority?

The West has always attached more importance to the political aspect of corporate life, just as India and the East have given a great deal more attention to the social side of it. In ancient India, as the Master has shown clearly in his *Indian Polity*, the king was largely a co-ordinating authority, who saw that there was no interference on the part of the central government with the autonomous life of the villages and townships. No doubt, that system degenerated with the decay of the ancient Indian civilisation, but the old spirit is still there, and any attempt at over-centralisation is bound to produce most undesirable reactions in the country. The local organisations in old India, whether in the village or in the township, dealt with all aspects of corporate life,—those that we call today administrative in a general sense, as well as those that would be called social in a narrower sense. How far

these bodies can be resuscitated and what power can be vested in them for better ordering of society is for the national legislature to decide. But what has to be remembered is that they should be in spirit what they were before, viz., intermediaries between the individual and the largest group. The interests of the individual and those of the nation should find harmony in these bodies. The word 'interest' is to be read in the broadest sense possible, as Dr. Motwani himself has made amply clear.

Human society, as Sri Aurobindo has pointed out, has passed through four definite stages—the ideal, the typical, the conventional and the rational. Man, today, is a rational being, and he has freed himself from the clutches of convention by the exercise of his reason. But, unfortunately, his reason has raised before him new forms, more malignant and tyrannical than those that he worshipped before. The very efficient, highly organised State that he has brought into existence has rendered Sociology an obsolete science, for there is nothing left for the individual and his social group to do; everything is done for them by the all-powerful dictator in the super-centralised State. Sri Aurobindo has, in his *Psychology of Social Development* (Chapter I) shown how the nature and spirit of certain functions in Indian society have changed during the four stages of development already mentioned. Such institutions as marriage and caste have acquired a new character, a new significance in every age. In some of the later chapters of the same book, we have a glimpse of what society would be like when man has passed beyond the stage of mental reason. "Brotherly love can be the only sure foundation of a perfect social evolution"—but this brotherhood and this love do not proceed either by the intellect or by the reason, nor even by the heart, but by the soul. "So alone," says the Master, "can egoism disappear and the true individualism of the unique godhead in each man found itself on the true communion of the equal godhead in humanity." Such is the goal towards which the evolution of society is proceeding. Till we get to that high eminence, mind and reason must do what they can to harmonise the existence of the individual man with his collective existence, social and political. The Master sounds a warning note. The old intellectual cultures of Europe ended in doubt and scepticism, and the pieties of old Asia in stagnation. Today man follows the line of, what he calls, progress,—“more knowledge, more equipment, more enjoyment, a greater and still greater complexity of social economy.” But where will all this lead humanity? Nowhere, we shall move along in a circle. The only thing to do is to look inward and install the spirit in the place of the mind as our leader and guide. Progress will then mean the soul's onward march towards a divine fulfilment on earth. What will happen to man's varied activity when this happens?

Of the spiritual aim, Sri Aurobindo says, "As it will regard man the intellectual, so it will regard man the collectivity, a collective soul seeking upon earth divine fulfilment in its manifold relations. Therefore all the different parts of man's life which correspond to the parts of his being, physical, vital, dynamic, emotional, aesthetic, ethical, intellectual, it will hold sacred and see in them instruments for a growth towards a divine living. And every human society, nation, people or other organic aggregate it will regard from the same standpoint, sub-souls, as it were, means of a complete manifestation and self-fulfilment of the Spirit." But even this will be attained, not by compulsion, but by a spontaneous healthy growth. Spirituality will respect the freedom of the individual, but it will not leave him to himself. It will not deny art and literature, philosophy and science, agriculture and handicraft, but it will lead all these activities of man towards their divine fulfilment. Such a change of outlook must, naturally, appear and develop in the individual before it can affect the group-mind. So we must take care that no excuse, no specious reasoning is advanced for the crushing out of the individual. Nothing should be done in the name of society or the state which would have this disastrous effect.

We have been carried away far from our original subject, viz., a review of the excellent book placed before us by Dr. Motwani. We have referred already to his deep knowledge of the subject and the industry he has put into his book. The American portion of it does not appeal to us very much. Indian social conditions are never going to be anything like the conditions in America. We have got to develop our social outlook with an eye to our own temperament and environment and history. This principle the learned author himself has, in fact, admitted. We have tried to indicate, in the light of Sri Aurobindo's teachings, the lines that our efforts should take. Dr. Motwani has all the grasp of a practical student of sociology and, in the third chapter of his book, he has put forward concrete suggestions about how to proceed in order to make the people of India sociologically conscious. These suggestions sound very sensible, but we are unable, in the absence of experience, to offer any criticism. An arm-chair critic of things practical is apt to cut a sorry figure. The author has studied carefully the old Indian point of view with regard to social organization; he refers to it as the other sociology "which goes beyond this world of sensible knowledge and studies man and nature in their timeless, spaceless origins and ends." We agree with him that in order to get at the integral truth we have to study the activities of man and Nature in space and time side by side with those that transcend time and space. The learned doctor claims that it is with "the explicit purpose of indicating

the complementary nature of these two systems that this book has been attempted," and we can, with reason say that he has nowhere forgotten this purpose. We have in our brief elucidation emphasised the point with regard to all human affairs and we must remember that the activities of the mind and intellect constitute only a process, an intermediate step leading to the goal where these two, hitherto very useful, faculties are transcended.

C. C. DUTT

(2)

Mahishasura-Mardani Stava (Sanskrit Text with translation and explanatory notes in Tamil). By *S. Shankaranarayanan*. B.A. (Hons.) Pp. III. Price Rs. 2. Publishers: Giri Press, Triplicane, Madras 5.

The *Devi Mahatmya*—Glory of the Goddess—occupies a place of unrivalled eminence as a Tantric Scripture. This ancient text occurs in the *Markandeya Purana*, but it is much more than a *Purana*, has worn well across the centuries as a sacred hymnal text for Tantric worship. It celebrates the Advent, the Mission and the Glory of the Supreme *Shakti* in her three well-known Manifestations—*Mahakali*, *Mahalakshmi* and *Mahasaraswati*. The book under notice constitutes the fourth chapter of the Text and contains verses of praise addressed to the *Devi*, the destroyer of *Mahishasura*, Power of Division and Disunion—son of *Diti*.

Each verse is printed in *Devanagari* first, then transcribed in *Tamil*; then follows word-for-word meaning; then the purport of the verse and last, sound explanatory notes. Mr. *Shankaranarayan* has displayed commendable industry and earnestness which is not lost on the reader. It is pleasing to note the intellectual clarity with which he brings to bear on the subject his assimilation of the philosophic and spiritual thought of the day. He quotes widely, but appropriately. The references in the lucid gloss range from the *Vedas*, the *Upanishads*, the *Gita*, the devotional poems of *Shankaracharya* down to the authentic words of great spiritual personalities of modern times. His inspiration seems to be the *Umasahasram* of the late *Vasishtha Ganapati Muni* whom he quotes freely, yet aptly. His outlook is charged with the influence of the yoga-spirit of *Sri Aurobindo*, a fact well attested by his references to the 'Seer of the secret of the World-Mother in Cosmic Existence'. In a striking study of the verse *Medhasi devi* the writer has equated the four Personalities of the Goddess mentioned in it with the Four Powers of the Mother as expounded

by Sri Aurobindo. Besides the Four Powers, the Secret of Creation, the Truth of Sacrifice and Phala-sruti are some of the main topics elaborated upon in the commentary in suitable places. There is a wealth of information in the book which is sure to benefit the devotee and students of this class of literature. The Tamil is flowing and chaste.

The translator has already to his credit another work of the kind, brought out by the same Publishers. The Giri Press are doing precious service by publishing these gems of devotional literature with translations in the regional tongue.

Mr. N. Chandrasekhara Iyer, Retired High Court Judge, has written a foreword commending the book.

K.

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